



MOOKHTAR-OOL-MOOLK

Sir Salar Jung Bahadoor G. C. S. I.



THE STORY
OF
MONT BLANC.

BY ALBERT SMITH.



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MDCCCLIII.

NOTICE.

THOSE of my readers who may be fortunate enough to light upon a copy of Mr. Auldjo's narrative—for it is now out of print—will find a valuable series of maps and plans, illustrating every subject and place of local interest at Chamouni. Mr. Murray's Handbook has an excellent sketch of the chain of Mont Blanc from the Brevent; and Mr. Bogue's "Guide to Switzerland and Savoy" is very minute and correct in all its Geneva and Chamouni details. I would strongly recommend to the tourist a little book sold at Geneva and Chamouni, called "Geneva and its Environs." It is written, I believe, by a gentleman named Prior, who resided some years in the neighbourhood of Chamouni, and was connected with some mining undertakings in the adjoining valleys. Keller's

singularly faithful Map of Switzerland is indisputable; and a cheap and excellently-abridged edition of De Saussure can be bought at most of the libraries at Geneva.

I can confidently recommend the Hôtel de la Couronne, at Geneva, as a comfortable, moderate, and well-conducted establishment. Young men need not mind sleeping at the top of the house; besides, it practises their legs for the Brevent and Jardin, to say nothing of the Grands Mulets.

The guides at Chamouni are now re-organized, and are obliged to go out with travellers in their turn. The tourist will be pleased to get Jean Tairraz (*naturaliste*); Jean Tairraz, of *Les Pres*; Gedeon Balmat; François Favret, of the *Pelerins*; and Jean Carrier. But they are all such excellent fellows, that it is difficult to choose between them; and the Balmats, Cachats, Devouassouds, and Coutets, are equally to be relied upon. In the event of illness, the visitor may entrust himself with confidence to Dr. Michon, a very kind-hearted and intelligent man. There is a clever little boy running about the village, named Michel Bossonnay, to whom a franc a day is a fortune. He is not big enough to carry anything, but he speaks

excellent French, and is very well informed about the localities. Julie, or Euphrasie, at the Pelerins, will know his habitat. Kehrli in the village, has by far the best assortment of woodwork; and a wooden case of Chamouni honey should by no means be forgotten. It is very delicious.

The most *direct* route to Chamouni, where time and money are objects, is by Folkestone, Boulogne, Paris, Châlons-sur-Saone, Lyons, and Geneva. Mont Blanc *can* be reached, by adapting tides, trains, and times, in fifty-six hours, from London, in this manner. Supposing that the excellent tidal arrangements of the South-Eastern Railway are studied, London may be left at six o'clock on Monday morning, and the traveller will arrive in Paris about seven in the evening. Taking a cab at once to the Paris and Dijon terminus, he will be in time to catch the mail train leaving at eight p.m., which will put him down at Chalons about four in the morning of Tuesday. A boat starts along the Soane at five, touching at Macon, and reaching Lyons about noon. Here he can remain until six in the evening, with plenty of time for a bath, dinner, &c., and then, starting in the diligence—the “*Berlines*,” I think, are the quickest—will arrive

at Geneva at six on Wednesday morning. Should there be no very great rush of people, he will find a place in the conveyances which leave for Chamouni in an hour. In the afternoon he will reach Sallanches, beyond which the road is not practicable for heavy carriages. *Chars* are in waiting, and he may sit down to his dinner, looking out at the sunset on Mont Blanc, on the third day of his departure from London. Of course I only recommend this route to those who have youth and health, and are much pressed for time. The actual expenses of the transit are—

	Francs.
London to Folkestone (first class)	25
Folkestone to Boulogne (saloon)	12
Boulogne to Paris (first class)	38
Paris to Chalons (ditto)	40
Chalons to Lyons (steamer)	5
Lyons to Geneva (intérieure)... ..	25
Geneva to Chamouni (voiture)	20
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Total	165

These fares will, of course, vary from time to time, but never more than a few francs. By taking the second-class seats of the railways, fore-part of the steamer, and *banquettes* of the diligences, it may be done for a much less sum; but on a very long, *continuous* journey, the cheapest places do not pay,

since the fatigue is doubled. The tourist should remember, above all things, to get the *visée* of the Sardinian consul in London, before starting, or he will be sent back at Annemasse—the frontier of Savoy—to Geneva.

Should the traveller intend, however, to make a more extended tour, the railway from Paris to Strasburg, and so on to Bâle, offers peculiar advantages. By this line, Switzerland is brought within *twenty-six* hours of London: and an admirable arrangement is in course of perfection. Excursion tickets, available for six weeks, will be granted, allowing the holder to stop as long as he pleases, within that time, at Boulogne, Paris, Nancy, and Strasburg.

The expenses of a couple of tourists keeping together need not exceed fifteen shillings each *per diem*. This will include *everything*—even to such few moderate *souvenirs* of the localities as they may choose to buy. A knowledge of French may be reckoned as saving a third of the travelling outlay, and should, at the present time, above all other languages, be acquired; at least by those who have to work their own way through the world. The Channel once crossed, there is no comparison between the

positions of one traveller who can chat with the conducteur, or the foreigner by his side in the *banquette* or at the *table d'hôte*, and of another who can put "Old Dan Tucker" into marvellous Latin or Greek verses, but stumbles in his inquiries as to roads, food, time, or expenses.

On *leaving* Chamouni, at the Martigny end of the valley, the Tête Noire is the finest pass. Entering it from that direction, perhaps the Col de Balme view is the greatest surprise. You have your first view of "Mount Blanc," as a gentleman, named Furguson, calls it, in a correction of Byron's celebrated lines, and indeed everywhere, in a book he has lately "done" on Switzerland.

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THE STORY OF MONT BLANC.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.



WENTY - SEVEN years ago — when children's books were rare presents, and were so prized, and read, and read again, until the very position of the paragraphs was known by heart — I had a little volume given to me at the Soho bazaar, called "The Peasants of Chamouni," which told, in a very truthful manner, the sad story of Dr. Hamel's fatal attempt to reach the summit of Mont Blanc in 1820. I dare say that it has long been out of print; but I have still my own old copy by me, and I find it was published by Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, in 1823.

My notions of the Alps at that time were very

limited. We had a rise near our town of Chertsey, called St. Anne's Hill, from which it was fabled that the dome of St. Paul's had once been seen with a telescope, at a distance of some sixteen or seventeen miles, as the crow flew: and its summit was the only high ground I had ever stood upon. Knowing no more than this, the little book, which I have said had a great air of truth about it, made a deep impression on me: I do not think that "The Pilgrim's Progress" stood in higher favour. And this impression lasted from year to year. Always devouring the details of any work that touched upon the subject, I at length got a very fair idea, topographical and general, of the Alps. A kind friend gave me an old four-volume edition of "De Saussure;" and my earliest efforts in French were endeavours to translate this work. I devoured the adventures of Captain Sherwill and Dr. Clarke in the magazines of our local institution; and finally I got up a small moving panorama of the horrors pertaining to Mont Blanc from Mr. Auldjo's narrative—the best of all that I have read; and this I so painted up and exaggerated in my enthusiasm, that my little sister—who was my only audience, but a most admirable one, for she cared not how often I exhibited—would become quite pale with fright.

Time went on, and in 1838 I was entered as a

pupil to the Hôtel Dieu, at Paris. My first love of the Alps had not faded; and when the *vacances* came in September, I started from Paris for Chamonui, with another equally humbly-appointed traveller, late assistant-surgeon in the 11th Hussars.

As medical students, it is scarcely necessary to state that our means were exceedingly limited—we were compelled to manage our expenses, though living in the Quartier Latin. But autumn was getting on, and the breaking-up of the schools was arriving. Paris would then be very dull, and the court-yard of the Messageries Royales suggested such enviable journeys, as the diligence offices were labelled to Geneva, Vienna, Rome, St. Petersburg, and Constantinople even, that standing, so to speak, on the high road to everywhere, the temptation to try and reach the Alps was too great to be resisted. And so, with great pains, collecting twelve pounds a-piece, which was to last us about five weeks, and which we carried about us, entirely in five-franc pieces, chiefly stuffed into a leathern belt round our waists; buying two old soldier's knapsacks at three francs each, and two pairs of hob-nailed shoes at five and a half, off we started, to get as far as we could in the time, and trust to chance for whatever turned up.

If there is anything more delightful than travelling with plenty of money, it is certainly making a journey

of pleasure with very little—provided always that health and spirits are good, and that one can find a companion similarly positioned. Circumstances and necessities throw you out of beaten tracks of proceeding, and make you acquainted with odd folks and adventures: not being bound by any conventional laws of travelling, you are more independent to wander wherever you please; and above all, there is little after-regret at the prospect of overbalancing the pleasure derived from the trip by the anticipation of winter retrenchment, to make up for the expenses thereby incurred.

It may not be uninteresting to reproduce so much of the diary kept at the time as relates to Chamouni. When I scribbled it down, I had no notion that I should ever become an author. I have preferred giving it word for word as written: and it begins as follows:—

Friday, September 21.—Having a prejudice in favour of Friday, inasmuch as everything I have begun or accomplished on that day has usually turned out well, we agreed to start from Paris that morning. There was, fortunately, opposition on the road to Geneva, and the diligences were running very cheap, a journey of seventy-eight successive hours,—*i. e.* from 8 o'clock on Friday morning until 2 p.m. on the following Monday,—for two pounds. We made a

good breakfast at our old *café* in the Rue M. le Prince before we started, and got the cook to boil us a dozen eggs very hard. We also took a large bottle—a *litre*—of *vin ordinaire*, and a leathern cup that folded up and went into the pocket. In a flat bottle, that we could tuck into the side of the knapsack, we had also some brandy. The beginning of the journey was not lively. It poured with rain, which beat into the *banquette*, and compelled us to keep the black curtains closed. This lasted until we got to Melun, where the diligence stopped for lunch. We took advantage of the halt, to run about the town and look at the place, making our meal, when we started again, from our stores, in addition to some pears and a “brick” of bread more than two feet long, bought in the town. The passengers paid three francs each for their *déjeuner*: ours did not cost ten sous. At Montereau, at the junction of the Seine and Yonne, we got down at the *relai* and ran on, by which means we saw in the market-place some criminals exposed on a platform, with their names and crimes inscribed over their heads. None of the other passengers saw this exhibition: indeed it was curious to notice that two English people in the *coupé* drew down the blinds on account of the sun, and when they did not do this they were asleep. At Sens, where we arrived about seven, the passengers dined at the great hotel:

four francs each. We went over to a *cabaret* which the postilion told us about, and had hot roast veal, omelette, bread, butter, salad, wine, and brandy, for twenty-four sous each. As night came on, we crept under the tarpaulin roof of the diligence, stacked all the luggage on each side, collected all the straw, and slept at full length tolerably well.

Saturday, 22nd.—As morning broke we found ourselves amongst the vineyards, which came down to the edge of the road. They are not nearly so pretty as our own hop-gardens; something like them at a distance, but not higher than raspberry-bushes. At Tonnerre, where they stopped to breakfast, we ran on again, with our bread and eggs in our pockets, and got plenty of grapes for nothing; for we were now approaching the Côte d'Or—the great wine country of France. We walked two or three miles before the diligence overtook us; and, what was worth everything, had a bathe in a little river, which freshened us up immensely. The people were all dozing again when the diligence came up; and the *conducteur* thought we had lost the way. We had plenty of walking that day, for the country was hilly, and, what appeared the most singular, there was no down hill to it. Nothing but vineyards everywhere, which are great things for untravelled poets to sing of, but sadly monotonous in a landscape. At

Semur—a very beautiful town by the side of a deep valley—the passengers dined. We bought a pie at a confectioner's, and replenished our wine-bottle. The *conducteur* turned out a capital fellow, and messed with us ; and after all, there was enough left for breakfast the following morning. We got to Dijon about two in the morning, and made friends at the *relai* for a jug of hot water to mix with our brandy. After this we crept under the roof again and slept as before ; getting quite used to the “jing ! jing ! jing !” of the horses' bells.

Sunday, 23rd.—The day broke very fine, and the whole country was an uninterrupted tract of vineyards. We stopped at Dôle to breakfast, and also to change diligences, where we found a little *café*, the landlord of which was very civil, and showed us all about the town, after we had washed at the fountain in the market-place, to the great delight of a party of girls, who lent us a huge bit of soap and some towels. We never saw so many pretty women as at this Dôle, nor so many wooden shoes—in fact, nobody appeared anxious to sell anything else, whatever kind of shop they kept. We bought a bottle of wine — “Burgundy,” recollect — for threepence. When we got back to the hotel we saw the two *coupé* passengers awake for the first time. One of them complained of having been charged three francs

and a half for a fowl that must have been roasted over and over again, and some questionable fish. We recommended him to buy a pie, but he said he did not like to—it looked so. Then they wanted to see the Public Walk with a view of the Alps, and the Cathedral, and other things we had told them of; but just then the order was given to take their places, so we still appeared to be the gainers. The new diligence had a perfect paradise of *banquettes*—very large, indeed, with no seat, but full of straw, so that we could lie down at full length, with our heads out in front. We invited the *conducteur* to dinner again, with the driver, from German sausage and cold duck,—a perfect festival laid in at Dôle. In return, the driver, who lived at Poligny, made us sup with him when we got there. We had haricot beans, soup, and thick slices of mutton broiled; and waited so long at it that the passengers got impatient, but they could not go on till the *conducteur* gave the word. Then we began slowly to climb the Jura, and this crawling pace was kept up all night.

Monday, 24th.—We got out to walk early, taking short cuts between the zigzag roads up the mountain, and got to Les Rousses, on the summit of the Jura, about seven o'clock, where we had breakfast literally in the clouds. The *conducteur* told us, if we left him to pay he would get everything for half-price, which

he did. From Les Rousses we began to descend. The road is beautifully hard and smooth, winding in all directions, with little stones all the way to mark it from the precipice. A sudden turn of the road brought to sight the famous view described by Rousseau, and so often quoted. The whole lake of Geneva, beautifully blue, could be seen many hundred feet below us, with the Alps on the other side, their summits only showing above the clouds; and the country, like a coloured map, at our feet. The passengers in the *intérieure* saw nothing of this, one of their windows looking against the mountain, and the other down the precipice; in the *rotonde* they could only look out behind them, as through the door of an omnibus; and in the *coupé* they had pulled the blinds down, because the morning sun shot right through the windows: so that we had the best of it again. From the foot of the mountain to Geneva the road was at the edge of the lake, like Barnes Terrace with the other side of the Thames taken away, and very English in appearance. The *conducateur* sent us to a clean second-rate inn, with a *restaurant* attached to it, so that we only paid for what we wanted, and had it when we pleased. After dinner we saw to our passports ourselves, in preference to paying a commissioner; watched the sun set on Mont Blanc,—a glorious sight, which the other passengers



lost, as they were just then at the *table d'hôte* of the expensive Hôtel des Bergues,—and then went to bed at seven, sheets and blankets proving quite a novelty. When we settled our accounts at night, we found our expenses of travelling and feeding, from Paris to bed time at Geneva, came to two pounds twelve and sixpence each—about a quarter of what they would have been had we gone in the *coupé* and lived conventionally.

Tuesday, 25th.—Up at half-past five, on the road to Chamouni, with our knapsacks on our backs, which rather dragged on us at first, but we soon got used to them. Walked to Bonneville before breakfast, which consisted of a roll and some peaches bought in the market-place. The difference of the money in Savoy made a remarkable bargain of this pur-

chase, which we never could understand. We gave a ten-sous piece, and got half-a-dozen peaches and twelve sous in exchange for it. Here we found a sort of lumber-waggon going to Cluses, on which the owner allowed us to ride, and a mile or two on the other side of this village—where most of the Geneva watches are made—we made a bargain with a return *char-à-banc*, for two francs, to go on to St. Martin.

The road was very lovely, although on comparatively a small scale,—hills, cascades, houses, and torrents on each side, like the Swiss part of the Colosseum, continued for miles; with Mont Blanc in the distance all the way. At Arpenaz some cannon were fired to produce an echo; which is very wonderful. The owner asked us if we would like to hear it, but as he wanted more money for the exhibition than we thought proper to give, we waited until a car full of travellers who were not far behind us came up, who directly ordered the exhibition, by which we were the gainers, as there was no charge for listening. At St. Martin we left the *char-à-banc*, and walked on to the baths of St. Gervais. On our way we met a hearty old man, who told us his name was Victor Tairraz,—brother of a Mont Blanc guide,—and that he kept the Hôtel de Londres at Chamouni. We observed, that being only students we could not afford a great hotel, on which he said if we did not mind sleeping right up at

the top of the house, we should have our beds at twenty-five sous each. We next bargained for breakfast at a franc and a half, and a "repast"—he did not say dinner—at two francs. All this was very well, and we decided on visiting him. We got to St. Gervais just at dusk: it is very like a large Shanklin Chine, with the baths at the end. We had for supper, rice-milk, fowls, potatoes, wine, and fruit; and some old ladies and gentlemen and a priest were of the party, as well as two enormous St. Bernard dogs. Before we had finished, two young men came in—an Edinburgh M.D., and a Frenchman, who said he was going all over Europe with two shirts and a pocket-comb. We agreed to travel together next day; and then paid our bills, which came to five francs a-piece, and astonished us very much, especially the Frenchman, who harangued the host for half an hour, and made him take a franc from each.

Wednesday, 26th.—Started for Chamouni at six o'clock, on a mountain-road, very fatiguing, but magnificently wild and beautiful. The Frenchman was a capital fellow, of unflagging spirits, never out of breath (he had not much to carry though), and climbed up and down the rocks after plants and insects with great agility; in fact, we agreed that he must have been the original "Acrobat of the Alps" we had heard of at Astley's. At Servoz we met a

Swiss Boy, the first we had seen : he was very dirty and lubberly, had a large *goître*, and was half-witted. The Alpine maidens, also, we encountered put us more in mind of Poor Law Unions than Annuals and Ballads : indeed, the Swiss villagers may be classed with Troubadours, Minstrel Pages, Shepherdesses, Rovers' Brides, and other fabulous pets of small poets and vocalists. We made a halt at Servoz, where we each bought a long pole, with a chamois' horn at the top, of the man at the inn. We also had breakfast there, for which he sent on our knapsacks in some one else's *char* to Chamouni, where we arrived at half-past-one—as soon as those who had ridden, and not half so much bumped about and shaken. Our bed-room, being high, had a far better view over the valley than any of the others ; and our “repast” appeared just as good as the *table-d'hôte* dinner, with the advantage of having it to ourselves. In the afternoon we went out in the fields, and sat on the flax-bundles, buying some bread and honey for supper, and finishing our cognac. Mont Blanc does not look to be so very high from Chamouni, by reason of everything around it being on a gigantic scale ; in fact, the Frenchman offered to wager that he would walk up it in a day. Certainly, if anybody could have done it, he would have been the man.

Thursday, 27th.—We started at seven for the Mer

de Glace—one of the “lions” of Chamouni. Having been told the night before that the road was very dangerous, and that we must pay for a guide, as well as have a mule a-piece on account of the distance, we were debating what we should do, when we saw a party start from the hotels, and determined that there could be no harm in following them.

We then saw that the difficulty did not lie in finding the path, but in missing it, as there was but one: that it was no more dangerous than the ascent to the tower at Rosherville, or the Dane John at Canterbury; and that, to lose all enjoyment of the journey, the best plan was to get on a mule. This is the case at most of the Swiss show-places. The story that the Mer de Glace resembles the sea suddenly frozen in a storm, is all nonsense. From Montanvert it looks rather like a magnified white ploughed field. We went down and crossed completely over to the other side. The ice of the glaciers is not clear like that on ponds, but opaque, and full of air-bubbles; in fact, it is a conglomerate of snow and hail-stones.

We returned to the *Châlet* on Montanvert very much fagged, and ate so much bread and cheese and honey, that we did not want any dinner, which was another economy, so we dawdled about on the mountain, and saw the people come and go, which was very amusing. In the course of four hours we met

some one from almost every nation on the earth, and, with scarcely an exception, each one told the rest that they could see something in his country quite as good. Of these comparing minds, the most daring were the Irish and the Americans. On our journey home, our jolly French friend was never once out of breath. He sang, hallooed, heaved large stones over the precipices, made short cuts down from one path to the other, and showed no symptoms of the slightest fatigue. We could not get him to sit down once—he said it tired him so! We got safely to Chamouni; strolled about the village; were invited by an Englishman to have some champagne with him, because it was his birthday, and then went to bed. Chamouni is the nicest place in Europe.

Friday, 28th.—This was an important day with us, inasmuch as it was a “general wash.” Our two companions went back to St. Martin, and D—— and I started on foot at half-past five for Martigny. Our worthy old host gave us a letter to the landlord of the Hôtel de la Tour, begging him to treat us as students in his charges. We bargained for some hard-boiled eggs at one of the cottages, waiting whilst they were cooked, and then marched on to the *Tête Noire* Pass, where we halted for breakfast at a little tavern, perched up high on the mountain like an eyrie, where they found us wine and a loaf. At the top of the



Forclaz—the magnificent mountain barrier between Chamouni and the Vallais—we halted to bathe, in a natural basin, off the road, where a block of granite had stopped up the torrent, and here we determined to wash our things, which was a laughable affair enough. We spread them out on a flat stone, and knocked them with another, as we had seen the washerwomen do at the fountains, and then put them to dry in the hot sun. They were not particularly well “got up,” to be sure, but very clean. This was a good notion, for we must have waited two or

three days to have had them done properly, and on the mountains shirt-fronts are not the chief objects of curiosity. During this halt we finished our eggs, and drank *kirschwasser* and water, and got to Martigny at six o'clock, where our host's letter was of use, for we had a famous hot supper for two francs each. Martigny is a wretched place—no shops nor anything else—so we went to bed about eight.

Saturday, 29th.—Left Martigny at six, to ascend the Great St. Bernard on foot—thirty odd miles, and a rise of seven or eight thousand feet. The morning was very depressing—cold, mist, and rain; so we spread our Macintosh capes over our heads, knapsacks, and all. This cleared up about ten, and we arrived at Orsières to breakfast, much a-head of some people who had left when we did, with mules and *char-à-bancs*. At Liddes, a village higher up, we entered the inn for some wine, when two Englishmen and an old Swiss joined us. We arrived at St. Pierre—the last hamlet up the mountain—about four, when it began to rain again, and so continued until night, without ceasing. Our journey now became no joke. The footpath was streaming with water from the hills; our clothes soaked through and through; our knapsacks dragging on us very heavily; and the rain, gradually turning to sleet and then to snow, whilst we had literally icicles in our mustachios. Our com-

panions relieved us of our knapsacks occasionally, in turn ; and one of them, a major in a line-regiment, walked behind to keep us up to the mark. He told us he had generally found that his soldiers went through hard marches better in rain than in fine weather. We came to a dismal little solitary hut, called the Canteen, at five, where we got some brandy, and then went on, past the Refuge and dead-house, when it got nearly dark, and the road very difficult to trace, as the water had carried away a foot-bridge, which caused us to go out of our way.

At last we were delighted to see the convent lights up a-head, as a very little more would have finished us ; indeed, had we been by ourselves we never should have arrived. I was dead beat, and tumbled down over my knapsack, when I got through the gate, as I was leaving it in the hall ; but I soon recovered. When we came into the *salle des voyageurs*, for supper, we found a dozen people assembled. It being a fast-day, we had soup, pancakes, potatoes, and beans, with stewed prunes and cheese. We enjoyed the meal very much, and a roaring fire looked cheerful enough. After supper, we drew round and chatted, and then had some music, for there was a piano, the natural keys of which were black, and the flats and sharps white. We were not sorry, at half-past nine, to get to bed, under eider-down quilts. The



rooms had double windows, and were tolerably warm considering our elevation.

Sunday, 30th.—A heavy fall of snow in the night. We came down to breakfast about half-past six, but could scarcely walk, our ankles had been so knocked about and twisted the day before, so we begged leave to stay another day. Everybody left about ten for Martigny, and as there was a solemnity of peasants in the *salle*, we were put in the refectory. It was a very dreary day ; the snow was falling out of doors, and

the dogs wandering about and barking. At two, we had dinner in the following order: soup, beef, potatoes, stewed rabbits flavoured with cinnamon, roast veal, cheese, nuts, and figs. We laughed heartily at the way the dinner was served. It came up a trap-door into a box, into which the monk dived to get it, so that at times we only saw his legs. After dinner some young monks came and talked to us, telling us many anecdotes about the dogs, but assuring us, at the same time, that all we hear about them generally is untrue. When they left for vespers, some peasants entered and began to play at cards and Chinese puzzles. More towards evening, some English travellers came up from Aosta; and at eight o'clock we all supped together with the monks in the refectory: a novel sight. They were very merry, and we thought it only wanted somebody to sing "How they laughed ha! ha!" to make the scene perfect.

Monday, October 1.—Started for Italy—it sounded very grand—at seven, having put our contributions into the *tronc* of the church, since nothing is demanded at the Great St. Bernard. You are in Italy ten minutes after leaving the convent. There was a dense fog on the mountains; but now and then, suddenly clearing away, it showed the white Alps, with the blue sky beyond them: a most magnificent effect. At the frontier village of St. Remy our

knapsacks were searched, and the man was going to take my pistols away, but we gave him a pocket-knife, and he passed them. As we got near the Vallée d'Aoust, the luxuriance of the country was wonderful. The vineyards are here much more picturesque than in France, the vines being raised on trellises about ten feet high, forming beautiful arbours. We got plenty of grapes for nothing, and most delicious ones. On arriving at Aosta, about two, a dirty-looking fellow offered to take us to a good hotel. We followed him, and he led us a long rambling walk, quite away from the town, until we turned back, firmly believing that he meant to get us to some lonely place, and then, with his fellows, to rob us. Aosta is a miserable place, and the Hôtel de la Couronne dear and dirty. There are some Roman remains, a great deal of frightful *goître*, some poor shops, and all the church clocks strike the hours twice over. We were very uncertain, for the first time, where to go next. We could not get a map of Italy, anywhere, and did not know the country at all. At last we were told that a diligence was to start for Ivrea at three the next morning, and we settled to go by that. We had our shoes mended for ten sous each; and bought some bread in long sticks, the thickness of a cane, with which we marched away to the vineyards and made a repast. The landlord of the inn charged us

so much, that we cut all the cold meat into sandwiches and stowed them in our knapsacks, and filled our flask with the wine we left.

Tuesday, 2nd.—At half-past two in the morning, we went down to the inn-yard, not having taken our clothes off, but thrown ourselves on the beds just as we were. Our vehicle was something between a hackney-coach and a wicker-basket, and our companions people of the humblest grade, who evidently lived upon garlick. As soon as it got daylight, we found that the road was highly romantic, being in a long valley, with an uninterrupted tract of chesnut-trees and luxuriant vineyards for thirty miles. In some places the grapes were trained in festoons from post to post, until they reached the tops of the mountains, on terraces, like large flights of steps. The diligence was desperately slow, for we were thirteen hours doing fifteen leagues ; but the charge ludicrously small for the journey. As we approached Ivrea, the country became flat, which was rather a relief after so much mountain scenery ; our eyes being once more kept on a level. We bought forty peaches for a penny, on entering Ivrea, where we stopped at the *Albergo della Posta*, a very fair inn. Evidently few English came this road, for the host was surprised to see us ; but much delighted, as his brother-in-law, the notary, had once been to London, and would be most

gratified to visit us. So he was sent for, and turned out a capital fellow ; joined us at supper, and would stand all sorts of bottles of wines. D— was so delighted at meeting a real notary—a character he had only known at the Opera—that he would keep singing bits from the “Sonnambula,” and going through every kind of “business” attached to the *rôle*. At night, the host came up and joined us, and we showed him how to make punch, after he had produced as a great rarity a bottle of rum. This new beverage he drank until he got intoxicated, when we put him to bed. He appeared to be literally the *maitre d’hôtel*, for we saw nobody else about. The notary then poured all the rest of the punch into a bottle, to take to a friend of his, high in the police ; and would not hear of our paying for anything. He said, when he was in London, a gentleman, whose name was perfectly unintelligible with his pronunciation, had kept him for three days, and he should be happy for life now that he had returned the hospitality. We insisted, however, on his accepting an English razor ; and this perfected his felicity.

Wednesday, 3rd.—Our friend came back to us at day-break, and walked some way out of the town with us on the road to Vercella. The day was exceedingly fine, and the sky all that we had imagined of Italy. We halted at one of the villages, and bought

a pound of bread in long sticks, and then, as usual, gathered the rest of our breakfast from the vineyards, always thinking of Rabelais, where he says, "For here it is to be remarked, that it is a celestial food to eat for breakfast hot fresh cakes with grapes, especially the frail clusters, the muscadines, &c." Passing through Viverone and Popolo, we bought some chestnuts for lunch at Cavaglia, where it was market-day. On leaving Cavaglia the country assumed a different appearance, being very level, with no vines, and very little foliage generally, and extraordinarily long, straight roads, with little stones at the sides. The people were making hay and drying Indian corn all the way along, and we went and sat with some of these, and had some wine. We began to flag very much as we got near Vercella, and the last two miles could scarcely get along, having walked with our knapsacks in a broiling sun more than eleven leagues. We were so worn and dirty, that at the first inn they refused to receive us, on which we went over to the *Albergo dei tre Re*, where everything was so very dirty that it was comically remarkable. The rooms were filthy, but the ceilings all painted with gaudy frescos, and the waiter a small person, like a pantomime imp. We went to bed at seven, and fell asleep directly.

Thursday, 4th.—The imp awoke us at five o'clock,

insisting that we had engaged a *voiturier* to take us to Novara; and we were obliged to have all the people in the hotel up, and institute a general row, before we could convince them to the contrary. However, we got up and set off, somewhat stiff with yesterday's march, and out of tune altogether. We had breakfast at a hovel in a village, where the man, we made sure, was an innkeeper by day and a brigand by night; but he only charged us a franc each for wine, eggs, and bread. Everybody and everything was as dirty as yesterday's. From being fagged, we made very short stages, getting to Novara about three, at the entrance of which town we were beset by crowds of *vetturini* wanting to take us on to Milan, but we agreed to walk. At the *Albergo del Giardino* we bargained for a dinner, bed, and breakfast: they asked nine francs, and took five. Novara is a handsome fortified town, with beautifully-built houses and good shops, at which we laid in our stores for the next day—a cold fowl, bread, and chesnuts. At the inn they gave us a bottle of new wine, from a vehicle like a water cart: it was like very sweet cider, and not unpleasant. The waiters had ear-rings, and only spoke Italian, but looked very good-tempered and anxious to please, so we got on pretty well. We walked about the town at night, admiring the sky, which was like burnished gold, and rose-coloured, in streaks, and then to bed.

Friday, 5th.—Up at half-past five, and on our way to Milan in the misty grey morning. Walked two leagues before breakfast, and then laying out our stores under some thorny acacias, had breakfast, with a quantity of lizards about the road—very harmless, pretty little things, who picked up a crumb now and then when thrown in their way. Afterwards an old priest walked a mile or two with us, and gave us two little medals, which he said would keep us from ague, as well as recommended us to a cheap hotel at Milan. We got there about four, and went to the *Albergo delle Croce Bianca*. Having made ourselves a little decent, we bought a map, and started to stroll about the town, and see the cathedral and churches. Returned and dined in the inn-yard, which had galleries like those in the Borough, but covered with vines. *Vetturini* were arriving and departing, women singing, guests at different tables drinking and playing games with their fingers, something like “Buck, buck, how many horns do I hold up?” and the evening so beautifully calm, that the flame of the candles never wavered. We were very happy : could scarcely believe that we had got so far away from home ; and pleased to find our money holding out capitally, when we examined our belts on retiring to bed.

So ended the Alpine portion of our tour ; and I am

not altogether without hopes that this plain account of it, tracking each day's work, and giving a tolerably fair notion of each day's expense, may induce others to make it when the autumn comes round again. We saw a great deal in this little journey—enough to talk and think about for many winters' evenings afterwards : and the few *souvenirs* of the different places we passed through are still amongst my most treasured curiosities.

The journey should, of course, be undertaken by two persons,—not only for the sake of society, but for economy ; as many little expenses do for both, which would have to be paid just the same for one : and the three most important items in the knapsack should be a knife, a ball of string, and some sticking-plaster. A soldier's old knapsack can always be procured in Paris, and a common round tin-candlebox in a ticking cover should be strapped to the top, in place of the *carton* fixed there. It is useful to hold the toilet things only wanted for a night, since, when the knapsack becomes fully packed, undoing it, and doing it up again, may be a matter of some trouble. The dandy oil-skin and Macintosh knapsacks sold at the trunk-shops in London are *utterly useless*.

Possibly we took the trip when the autumn was a little too advanced. But the comparatively short days were still long enough for the quantity of walk-

ing required in each : and the vintage compensated for a great deal. The best detail of the road is to be found in Murray's and Bogue's "Handbooks;" all the other "Guides" are catchpenny affairs, copied from one another, and almost legendary in their descriptions, or filled up with spun-out pictures of scenery, when the originals are before you. These things are generally as uninteresting to read as a newspaper account of the sheriff's liveries, or the re-decoration of a theatre ; and might always give up their space, with advantage, for something better.

Reports of continental disturbances should never keep any one at home. Whatever may be going on, the traveller, depend upon it, will almost always find a good *table d'hôte* at the hotels, a look of welcome in the shops, and a comfortable place in the diligence or railway in the cities : and on the mountains the glacier will be equally wonderful and the valley equally picturesque, whether a republic, or a monarchy, or nothing at all, characterizes the country at the time.

Pedestrians must not expect to find everything *couleur de rose*. Trivial annoyances of every description will be constantly starting up, but if temper is lost, they become ten times worse : a firm resolve should be taken to laugh at everything, with the certainty that, however vexatious the occurrence may

be at the time, it will only serve to talk about the more merrily when you get home again. After I was robbed by the brigands in 1840—with an account of which I made my *début* in the literary world—I was left all the next day—a wet Sunday—at Ferrara, without any of my clothes, or travelling nick-nacks and minor comforts, in the dreary hotel of a gloomy city, with no notion of how I should get back to England. I have found myself in Venice without a franc, from arriving there before the *poste restante* letters I expected. I have been kept back by passports; shut up all night in a dirty *corps de garde*; and even been “invited” by the *procureur du Roi* to attend at the Palais de Justice, and justify certain heedless acts against order committed in my student days; but when all these troubles were gone and past, I would not but have had them happen for any consideration. In the reminiscences of them I have found a great proportion of the pleasures of travelling.

Looking back to this happy time, every incident on our little journey is as vividly impressed on my mind as though only a fortnight instead of fourteen years had elapsed since I made it. I remember old Victor Tairraz’s printed card of his hotel prices, with a view of the establishment at the top of it, in which every possible peak of the Mont Blanc chain that could be selected from all points of the compass was

collected into one aspect, supposed to be the view from all the bedroom windows of the establishment, in front, at the back, and on either side. I was annoyed at this card; for I could not reconcile, at that golden time, my early dreams of the valley of Chamouni, with the ordinary business of a Star-and-Garter-like hotel.

I remember, too, what a night of expectation I passed, reflecting that on the early morrow I should see Mont Blanc with my own practical eyes. When I got out of my bed the next morning—I cannot say “awoke,” for I do not think I slept more than I should have done in the third class of a long night-train—I went to the window; and the first view I had of the Mont Blanc range burst on me suddenly, through the mist—that wondrous breath-checking *coup d’œil*, which we all must rave about when we have seen it for the first time—which we so sneer at others for doing when it has become familiar to us. Every step I took that day on the road was as on a journey to fairy-land. Places which I afterwards looked upon as mere common halts for travellers—Servoz, with its little inn, and *Cabinet d’Histoire Naturelle*, where I bought my baton; the *montets* above Pont Pelissier; the huts at Les Ouches, where I got some milk—were all enchanted localities. And when, passing the last steep, as the valley of

Chamouni opens far away to the left, the glittering rocky advanced post of the Glacier des Bossons came sparkling from the curve, I scarcely dared to look at it. Conscious that it was before me, some strange impulse turned my eyes towards any other objects—unimportant rocks and trees, or cattle on the high pasturage—as though I feared to look at it. I never could understand this coquetting with excitement until years afterwards, when a young author told me a variety of the same feeling had seized him as he first saw a notice of his first book in a newspaper. He read the paragraphs above and below and about it; but only glanced at the important one, as though striving constantly to renew the vivid pleasure he had felt upon first seeing it. The whole of that sojourn at Chamouni passed like a dream. With the first light I used to watch the summit of Mont Blanc from my room; and at sunset I always went into the fields behind the church to see the rosy light creep up it, higher and higher, until it stood once more—cold, clear, mocking the darkening peaks below it—against the sky. From long study of plans, and models, and narratives, I could trace every step of the route: and I do believe, if any stalwart companion had proposed it, with the recollection of what Jaques Balmat and Dr. Paccard had done alone, I should have been mad enough to have started on

their traces. I was in hopes, from the settled weather, that some one would attempt the ascent whilst I was at Chamouni, when I should immediately have offered myself as a volunteer or porter to accompany him ; but no one came forward until the day after my departure, and then a lady, Mademoiselle Henriette d'Angeville, succeeded in reaching the top, together with the landlord of the Hôtel Royal, and a Polish gentleman, who was stopping in the house.

When I came home to England I had many other things to think about. With the very hard work which the medical practice attached to a large country union required, I had little time for other employment. One dull evening, however, I routed out my old panorama, and as our little town was entirely occupied at the time with the formation of a literary and scientific institution, I thought I could make a grand lecture about the Alps. Availing myself of every half-hour I could spare, I copied all my pictures on a comparatively large scale—about three feet high—with such daring lights, and shadows, and streaks of sunset, that I have since trembled at my temerity as I looked at them ; and then contriving some simple mechanism with a carpenter, to make them roll on, I selected the most interesting parts of Mr. Auldjo's narrative, and with a few interpolations of my own produced a lecture which, in the town, was considered quite a "hit,"

for the people had seen incandescent charcoal burnt in bottles of oxygen, and heard the physiology of the eye explained by diagrams, until any novelty was sure to succeed. For two or three years, with my Alps in a box, I went round to various literary institutions. The inhabitants of Richmond, Brentford, Guildford, Staines, Hammersmith, Southwark, and other places, were respectively enlightened upon the theory of glaciers and the dangers of the Grand Plateau. I recall these first efforts of a showman—for such they really were—with great pleasure. I recollect how my brother and I used to drive our four-wheeled chaise across the country, with Mont Blanc on the back seat, and how we were received, usually with the mistrust attached to wandering professors generally, by the man who swept out the Town Hall, or the Athenæum, or wherever the institution might be located. As a rule, the Athenæums did not remind one of the Acropolis: they were situated up dirty lanes, and sometimes attached to public-houses, and were used, in the intervals of oxygen and the physiology of the eye, for tea festivals and infant schools. I remember well the “committee-room”—a sort of condemned cell, in which the final ten minutes before appearing on the platform were spent, with its melancholy decanter of water and tumbler before the lecture, and plate of mixed biscuits and

bottle of Marsala afterwards. I recollect, too, how the heat of my lamps would unsolder those above them, producing twilight and oil avalanches at the wrong time; and how my brother held a piece of wax-candle end behind the moon on the Grands Mulets (which always got applauded); and how the diligence, which went across a bridge, would sometimes tumble over. There are *souvenirs* of far greater import that I would throw over before those old Alpine memories.

No matter why, in the following years I changed my lancet into a steel pen, and took up the trade of authorship. My love of the Alps still remained the same; and from association alone, I translated the French drama *La Grace de Dieu*, under the name of *The Pearl of Chamouni*, for one of the London minor theatres. I brought forward all my old views, and made the directors get up the scenery as true to nature as could be expected in an English playhouse, where a belief in the unreal is the great creed; and then I was in the habit of sitting in a dark corner of the boxes, night after night, and wondering what the audience thought of "The valley and village of Chamouni, as seen from the Col de Balme pass, with Mont Blanc in the distance:" so ran the bill. I believe, as far as they were concerned, I might have called it Snowdon or Ben Nevis with equal force; but I knew it was correct, and was satisfied.

In the ensuing seven or eight years I always went over to Savoy whenever I had three weeks to spare in the autumn. Gradually the guides came to look upon me as an *habitué* of the valley: indeed I almost regard Chamouni now as a second home. It had been a first love; and amidst all the wear and tear, and fast-burning excitement of a literary man's life at the present time, and the more vivid attractions of Paris, Naples, and the brilliant East, I followed the old proverb, and always returned to "*mes premiers amours*." And in the autumn of 1851 I was fortunate enough to carry out the desire of nearly thirty years, and to stand on the summit of Mont Blanc.

I mention these almost trifling circumstances to show that my attachment to Chamouni was no whim of a season; that my venture arose from no mere craving for temporary notoriety; and that those who chose to attack me, in print, on my return from its achievement, in such a wanton and perfectly uncalled-for manner, knew nothing at all about the matter.

From childhood, then, I had taken a deep interest in Mont Blanc and Chamouni. With no earthly intention of ever publishing them, I had, from time to time, collected a mass of notes and details connected with the localities in question: lately, I have found, to my infinite delight, that a large proportion of the public has appeared to be, with me, interested in the subject. I have therefore arranged my

papers in regular order ; and in the hope that the volume may find its way, in the autumn, from our bustling, smoky, dusty London to my beloved Chamonui—that its pages may be chequered by the dancing sunlight coming through the forest leaves of Chede and Servoz, or that it may be read to the music of the brawling Arve below, and the tinkling of the hundred cattle-bells high up and away in the pastures of the Breven and Montanvert—I most cheerfully set about my task.



CASCADE AT CHAMONUI.

CHAPTER II.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF CHAMOUNI.

UP to the year A.D. 1741 very little was generally known about Chamouni. The sober and steady-going citizens of Geneva had long imagined that the dirty river which pollutes the bright blue of their arrowy Rhone arose from amidst some snow-covered mountains, whose tops they could see from their lakes; and they imagined that one of these mountains must be very high indeed, because the sun's rays rested on it long after they had disappeared from the other peaks. But beyond this, they troubled their heads no further in the matter. The country people about Geneva had given the name of *Les Montagnes Maudites* to the entire chain; and a superstition was current amongst them that the curse of living amongst eternal snows was inflicted on the inhabitants of the region for their crimes. Yet the locality was a recognised

one: for in an ancient map of Switzerland, annexed to a Latin copy I possess of the "Itinera par Helvetiæ Alpinas Regiones," by Johannes Scheuchzerus, bearing date 1723, the course of the Arve is clearly given flowing by *Chammuny*; but amongst the mountains depicted there is no trace of the Mont Blanc chain.

To the researches of Captain Markham Sherwill, who ascended Mont Blanc successfully in 1825, we owe the best account of the early history of Chamouni. The guide books, which all copied one another, published previously to his visit—and indeed subsequently, until Murray's Handbook set the matter right—described the valley of Chamouni as having been *discovered* by two English travellers, Dr. Pococke and Mr. Windham. To those gentlemen I shall allude at greater length presently. The village was called *Le Prieuré* (the name by which it is still known to the country people), from the circumstance of a convent of Benedictines having been founded there at a remote period. During one of his visits, Captain Sherwill heard, by chance, that a great many of the archives relating to the Priory were still preserved in an old trunk; but that in all probability they had become illegible, partly from negligence and partly from age and dust. He obtained permission to examine the documents, and assisted by M. Paccard—a son of the Dr. Paccard who first

gained the summit of Mont Blanc with Jacques Balmat in 1786—he discovered and arranged the venerable papers. Spiders and their webs seemed for a while to defy the intrusion of a stranger's eye, whilst the dust that covered the bundles of parchment appeared as old as the Priory itself. They were in less confusion than was to be expected, and most of them were drawn up in Latin, though some of a later date were written in the French language.*

The earliest paper was the original act for the foundation of the Priory, and was as follows:—

“ In nomine Sanctæ et Individuæ Trinitatis.

“ Ego Aymo, Comes Gebennensis, et filius meus Girolodus, damus et concedimus Domino Deo Salvatori nostro, et Sancto Michaëli Archangelo de Clusâ, omnem campum munitum, cum appenditiis suis, ex aquâ quæ vocatur Dionsa, et rupe quæ vocatur alba, usque ad Balmas, sicut ex integro ad comitatum meum pertinere videtur; id est, terras, sylvas, alpes, venationes, omnia placita et Banna; et Monachi Deo et Archangelo servientes, hoc totum habeant, et teneant, sine contradictione alicujus hominis, et nihil nobis nisi eleëmosinas et orationes pro animabus nostris et parentum nostrorum retinentes.

* Historical Sketch, p 12.

“Ego Andreas, Comitis Capellanus, hanc cartam præcepto ipsius Comitis scripsi et tradidi, feriâ 7^a lunâ. Papa Urbano regnante.”

“At the foot of this deed is the seal of the Count Aymon, in white wax ; and although the act is without date, we know that, by the mention of Pope Urban, it must have been executed during the reign of Urban the Second, who was Pope from the year 1088 to 1099. We may therefore conclude, that the donation of lands, and the foundation of the Priory, took place somewhere about the year 1090.”

“*Ex aqua Dionsa usque ad Balmas*” is evidently from the Dioza—the river crossed on leaving Servoz—to the (Col de) Balm ; and from this document we also arrive at the derivation of the name of Chamouni. *Campus munitus*, or “fortified field,”—so termed from the impregnable barriers which the inaccessible mountains, glaciers, and aiguilles raised about it—will give us, in French, *Champ muni* : and so we have no great difficulty in tracing the present name.

“Soon after the first establishment of the Benedictines in the valley, many strangers came and settled near about the Priory, some for the purpose of daily labour, while others, under certain conditions, obtained a portion of a forest, to root up, clear, and bring the land into a state something like cultivation, thus permitting the cottager to hope for and calculate on an



increase of prosperity. But these strangers, it appears, could not, under any pretence whatever, establish themselves in the valley without the permission of the Prior ; and for this simple reason—that the lands all belonged to the Priory : those, however, to whom permission was granted, became, as it were, the property of the Prior, and were obliged strictly to obey his laws, and consider him as their sovereign. Thus the Prior, from a continual increase of settlers, found it necessary, from time to time, to issue new laws, which were never contested by the small social pact

that seemed quiet and happy in the solitude of this secluded spot.

“One of the leading articles of this new code will at once show the power of the new chief. We give it in its own language :—‘*Que si quelque personne, de quelle qualité qu’elle soit, vient à habiter ou demeurer dans ladite vallée, n’étant pas lige dudit Prieur et Priuré, et vouloir faire communauté avec lesdits hommes, elle doit subvenir et fournir aux esgances, charges et subsides desdits communiers et communauté, selon faculté : et si ladite personne refusoit de payer auxdits communiers, qu’elle seroit contrainte de sortir du lieu, avec ses biens, dans un mois, et quitter ladite vallée. Fait du 20 janvier 1330.*’

“The arrival of strangers at Chamouni at this early period must have been of no uncommon occurrence or the Prior would not have thought it necessary thus to issue strict laws which applied solely to the new comers.

“Little occurred, during the remainder of the fourteenth century, of any public interest in this new rising little world, except a formal promise, sealed, and signed by the Abbot of Sallenche, distant from Chamouni about six leagues in a westerly direction, to observe all the privileges granted to, and all the laws promulgated by, the Prior.

“We now come to the first visit made by the Bishop

of Geneva to this extreme corner of his diocese, where he arrived as late as the 4th of October in the year 1443. He was accompanied by the Abbot, his two officiating clerical attendants, and some menial persons. The visiting party performed the journey on foot. They remained several days at the Priory to repose ; and, after having visited this most secluded part of his diocese, the Bishop returned to Geneva by the way of Annecy, but by which road is not particularly mentioned.

“The following act, bearing date Nov. 1530, signed by Philippe de Savoie, who was Duc de Nemours and Comte de Genève, proves that the population around the Priory had considerably augmented ; for this Prince grants special leave to the inhabitants to hold a free fair twice in the year, on the 15th of June and on the last day of September, which are observed to this period. The act concludes thus : ‘Tous les marchands allants et venants avec leurs marchandises, sans estre aucunement empeschés ny arrestés pour debtes ny pour autres choses quelconques en quelle manière que ce soit.

‘Fait du 3^e Novembre 1530.

‘*Signé* PHILIPPE.’

“In three years afterwards the same Prince granted permission to hold a public market at Chamouni every Thursday, which is also still in usage.

“Thus we find that early in the sixteenth century peculiar advantages were given to those persons who frequented the valley, and encouragement given to all comers and goers; for we learn, by the above act of Philippe, they were even exempt from arrest or molestation either for debt or any other misdemeanor.

“Under the date of 1567 we find an ordonnance issued by the Supreme Court of Savoy, authorising the Abbot of Sallenche and the Prior of Chamouni to build a bridge, at their joint expense, over the Arve, near Servoz, ‘wide enough for comers and goers on foot and on horseback, and for beasts laden with merchandise.’ There is no reason to suppose that this bridge was built on any other spot than where the present one stands, known by the name of the ‘*Pont Pélissier*,’ this being decidedly the most convenient place, the two sides of the river being of solid rock, while the passage for the waters is remarkably narrow.

“The Château of St. Michel, the ruins of which we see situated on a monticule near the bridge, was inhabited at the date of the above ordonnance; but the town of St. Denis had long been destroyed and swept away by the breaking-up and discharge from a lake which had accumulated from ages unknown, and which was in those days to be seen where the low meadows now are, between the foot of the rock on

which the ruins of St. Michel stand, the village of Servoz, and the entrance to the romantic and unfrequented valley of Châtelas, through which the waters burst forth, probably by the fall of some of the rocks that served as a dam to restrain and form the lake. There is a small hamlet distant from the road about a quarter of a mile, which bears the name of 'Lac,' and is built where the lake was formerly in its greatest expanse. Should the pedestrian pass through the valley of Châtelas, instead of pursuing the usual road by Servoz, he will see distinctly the remains of the aqueducts used for conveying water from the lake to the town of St. Denis. The foot-road that leads to this rugged passage passes close to the ruins of St. Michel, traverses a part of the low land where the lake was, and, after scrambling over some rocks, the pedestrian will arrive, if he follow the path to the right hand, at the Pont des Chèvres; but if he take the one to the left, he may visit the ruins of the aqueducts, and thus regain the high road that skirts the plain of Passy.

" July 30, 1606, the learned and remarkable divine, St. François de Sales, arrived at Chamouni in the dignity of Bishop of Geneva.

" It appears that about two months before his visit, which was included in a general visitation of this diocese, he wrote to the then Prior, to know the extent

of the parish, the number of inhabitants, their moral character, the occupations, and the commerce, if any, of the natives ; also the number of poor and of those who were comparatively rich ; the proportion of catholics and heretics, the state of the church (the present one at Chamouni being already built, for we see over the great entrance the date of 1602), and desiring a general report of all that related to the Priory, the valley, and the church. Soon after receiving a full account and answer to all these questions, he laid his plan for his journey.

“ It would have been very desirable to have a copy of the report made by the Prior, but it was not among the archives, and most of those of this date were materially injured by damp and vermin.

“ There are, however, some few details preserved of the visit of St. François de Sales, drawn up in the form of a diary. It is therein stated that he was accompanied by only two persons, he being, as his general history shows, a man of extreme modest demeanour, and possessed of no love of ostentation or show. He arrived at Chamouni on foot, and took up his abode in a cottage in the village, which exists to this day, and is perhaps the oldest house of the valley. Owing to the rugged footpath and rocks over which it appears he was obliged to pass, his hands and feet were bleeding and in a lacerated state. These diffi-

culties probably presented themselves after passing the Pont Pélissier, where the path formerly followed the depth of the dark and gloomy ravine where the Arve is seen foaming to extricate itself from its rocky prison ; for the road did not then, as it does now, pass over 'les montées,' in order to arrive by a more gradual ascent to the immediate valley of Chamouni, near the village of les Ouches.

"St. François remained many days visiting the Priory, the poor, and the sick. He officiated in the parish church, gave his benediction to every class, and distributed alms where they were most required. On his departure from Chamouni, he was accompanied by a crowd of persons, all eager to testify the high respect and admiration they entertained of his eminent qualities : at the moment of his separation from them, he delivered a short sermon on the highway, took his leave, and pursued his journey towards Sallenche."



CHAPTER III.

THE VISIT OF MESSRS. POCOCKE AND WINDHAM.



THE Bishops of Geneva continued from time to time to visit the valley, but from 1650 nothing occurred of any public interest, until the excursion made by Dr. Pococke and Mr. Windham, in 1743. To those gentlemen we are indebted for the first practical information about the Valley of Chamouni. A rare old book is now lying before me, containing

“An Account of the GLACIERES or ICE ALPS in SAVOY, in Two Letters, one from an *English Gentleman* to his Friend at *Geneva*; the other from PETER MARTEL, Engineer, to the said *English Gentleman*. Illustrated with a MAP, and two VIEWS of the PLACE, &c. As laid before the ROYAL SOCIETY. LONDON, Printed for PETER MARTEL, and Sold by *W. Meadows*, in *Cornhill*; *P. Vaillant* in the *Strand*; *G. Hawkins* between the *Two Temple Gates*; *R. Dodsley* in *Pall Mall*; *J. Pallaret* against *Catherine Street* in the *Strand*; and *M. Cooper* in *Passer Noster Row*. MDCCXLIV. (Price One Shilling and Six-pence.)”

The letter was written to Mr. Arland, a celebrated painter at Geneva, and the author was no less a person than Mr. Windham himself. I have great pleasure in reproducing, entire, this curious document. The absence of any false colouring or exaggeration, which might have been excusable in such circumstances, is remarkable.

SIR,

ACCORDING to your Desire I send you an Account of our Journey to the *Glacieres*. I shall give it you in the plainest Manner, without endeavouring to embellish it by any florid Descriptions, although the Beauty and Variety of the Situations and Prospects that we observed in this unfrequented Part of the World, would well deserve to be described by one, who, like you, join to so great a Skill in Painting so lively and Poetical an Imagination; but these not being my Talents, I will, as I said before, confine myself to the giving you a faithful Relation of the Incidents of our Journey, and acquainting you with the Observations we made. I shall add a few Hints, which may be useful to such as shall hereafter have the same Curiosity that we had, and who may perhaps have Advantages and Conveniences which we had not to make more accurate Observations. It is really Pity that so great a Curiosity, and which lies so near you, should be so little known; for though *Scheuchzer*, in his *Iter Alpinum*, describes the *Glacieres* that are in the Canton of *Berne*, yet they seem to me by his Description to be very different from those in Savoy.

I had long had a great Desire to make this Excursion, but

the Difficulty of getting Company had made me defer it: Luckily in the Month of *June* last* *Dr. Poccoke* arrived at *Geneva* from his Voyages into the *Levant* and *Egypt*, which Countries he had visited with great Exactness. I mentioned to him this Curiosity, and my Desire to see it, and he who was far from fearing Hardships, expressing a like Inclination, we immediately agreed to go there; when some others of our Friends found a Party was made, they likewise came into it, and I was commissioned to provide what was necessary for our setting out.

As we were assured on all hands, that we should scarcely find any of the Necessaries of Life in those Parts, we took with us Sumpter Horses, loaded with Provisions, and a Tent, which was of some use to us, though the terrible Description People had given us of the Country was much exaggerated. I had provided several Mathematical Instruments to take Heights, and make Observations with, hoping that *Mr. Williamson*, an able Mathematician, Governor to Lord *Hadinton*, would have been of the Party; but he declining it, on account of the Fatigue which he fear'd he should not be able to support, I chose not to take the Trouble of carrying them, there being no Person in the Company so capable as he of making a proper use of them.

We set out from *Geneva* the 19th of *June*, N.S. we were† Eight in Company, besides five Servants, all of us well arm'd, and our Baggage-Horses attending us, so that we had very

* The same who has lately published so accurate and ingenious an Account of his Travels.

† Viz. Lord *Hadinton*, the Honourable *Mr. Baillie* his Brother, and *Mess. Chetwynd, Aldworth, Poccoke, Price, Windham, and Stirlingfleet*.

much the Air of a Caravan. The first Day we went no farther than *Bonneville*, a Town about four Leagues distant from *Geneva*, according to the way of reckoning there ; these four Leagues took us more than six Hours riding. This Place is situated at the Foot of the *Maule*, and close by the River *Arve* ; 'tis surrounded with beautiful Meadows and high Mountains, covered with Trees, which form all together a very delightful Situation. There is a very good Stone-Bridge near the Town, but it had suffered in the late Innundation of the *Arve*, which had carried away part of it. Our Inn was a tolerable one for *Savoy* as to every thing but Beds.

The next day being the 20th, we set out very early in the Morning, and passed the *Arve* ; our Road lay between that River and the Mountains, all along which we were entertained with an agreeable Variety of fine Landships. They reckon two Leagues from *Bonneville* to *Cluse*, but we were three Hours and a half in going it.

Cluse is situated in a narrow Pass between the Mountains, which almost meet in this Place [leaving only room for the *Arve*, which is thus hemm'd in for above a League together.] Before you come to *Cluse* there is a kind of Hermitage, upon a Rock on the Right Hand, where we climb'd up in order to enjoy the Prospect, which is *delicious* ; after that we passed the *Arve* over a fine Stone Bridge, of one very large Arch, and continued our Journey for about an Hour and an half through a narrow Road, along the *Arve*, between Rocks of a prodigious Height, which look'd as if they had been split on purpose to give the River a Passage. Not to mention the Beauty of the Views all along, we were extremely entertained by continual Echoes, and the prodigious rattling, caused by cracking a Whip, or firing a Pistol, which we repeated several

Times. We saw Cascades on every Side, which fell from the Top of High Rocks into the *Arve*. There is one among the rest of singular Beauty, it is called the *Nan d'Arpena*, 'tis a great Torrent, which falls from a very high Rock; all the Company agreed it must be higher than *Saleve*. As for my Part, I will not pretend to decide about it, I however may venture to say, that the Cascade of *Terni* does not fall from near so great a Height; but then the Quantity of Water, when we saw it, was much less than at this last mentioned Place; tho' the People of the Country assured us, that at certain times the Water is much more abundant than it was then.

After about three Hours riding from *Cluse*, we came to Saint *Martin's* Bridge, right against *Salanches*, which is on the other Side of the *Arve*. We did not care to go out of our Way into the Town; but chose rather to encamp in a fine Meadow near the Bridge, in order to refresh ourselves. From thence we set out again on our Journey, and after four Hours riding through very bad Ways, being obliged to cross some dangerous Torrents, we arrived at a little Village called *Servoz*. Our Horses suffered here very much, being tied to Pickets all Night in the open Air for want of Stabling; besides there was neither Oats, nor any other Forrage, but Grass fresh cut; as for ourselves, as we had brought all Necessaries along with us, we were well enough off, except as to Beds, and that want was supplied by clean Straw in a Barn.

From thence we set forward at break of Day, and passed the *Arve* once more over a very bad wooden Bridge, and after having clim'd over a steep Mountain, where we had no small Difficulty with our Horses, their Shoes coming off continually, and they often running the risk of tumbling into

the *Arve*, which run at the Bottom of the Rock, we came into a pleasant Valley, where we pass'd the *Arve* a fourth time over a Stone Bridge, and then first had a View of the *Glacieres*. We continued our Journey on to *Chamouny*, which is a Village upon the North-side of the *Arve*, in a Valley, where there is a Priory belonging to the Chapter of *Salanches*; here we encamp'd, and while our Dinner was preparing, we inquired of the People of the Place about the *Glacieres*. They shewed us at first the Ends of them which reach into the Valley, and were to be seen from the Village; these appear'd only like white Rocks, or rather like immense Icicles, made by Water running down the Mountain. This did not satisfy our Curiosity, and we thought we were come too far to be contented with so small a Matter; we therefore strictly inquired of the Peasants whether we could not by going up the Mountain discover something more worth our Notice. They told us we might, but the greatest Part of them represented the Thing as very difficult and laborious; they told us no-body ever went there but those whose Business it was to search for Crystal, or to shoot *Bouquetins* and *Chamois*, and that all the Travellers, who had been to the *Glacieres* hitherto, had been satisfied with what we had already seen.

The Prior of the Place was a good old Man, who shewed us many Civilities, and endeavoured also to dissuade us; there were others who represented the Thing as mighty easy; but we perceived plainly, that they expected, that after we had bargain'd with them to be our Guides, we should soon tire and that they should earn their Money with little Trouble. However our Curiosity got the better of these Discouragements, and relying on our Strength and Resolution, we determined to attempt climbing the Mountain. We took with

us several Peasants, some to be our Guides, and others to carry Wine and Provisions. These People were so much persuaded that we should never be able to go through with our Task, that they took with them Candles and Instruments to strike Fire, in case we should be overcome with Fatigue, and be obliged to spend the Night on the Mountain. In order to prevent those among us who were the most in wind, from fatiguing the rest, by pushing on too fast, we made the following Rules: That no one should go out of his Rank; That he who led the way should go a slow and even Pace; That who ever found himself fatigued, or out of Breath, might call for a Halt; And lastly, that when ever we found a Spring we should drink some of our Wine, mixed with Water, and fill up the Bottles, we had emptied, with Water, to serve us at other Halts where we should find none. These Precautions were so useful to us, that, perhaps, had we not observed them, the Peasants would not have been deceived in their Conjectures.

We set out about Noon, the 22^d of June, and crossed the *Arve* over a wooden Bridge. Most Maps place the *Glacieres* on the same Side with *Chamoigny*, but this is a Mistake. We were quickly at the Foot of the Mountain, and began to ascend by a very steep Path through a Wood of Firs and Larche Trees. We made many Halts to refresh ourselves, and take breath, but we kept on at a good Rate. After we had passed the Wood, we came to a kind of Meadow, full of large Stones, and pieces of Rocks, that were broke off, and fallen down from the Mountain; the Ascent was so steep that we were obliged sometimes to cling to them with our Hands, and make use of Sticks, with sharp Irons at the End, to support ourselves. Our Road lay slant Ways, and we had

several Places to cros where the *Avalanches* of Snow were fallen, and had made terrible Havock; there was nothing to be seen but Trees torn up by the Roots, and large Stones, which seemed to lie without any Support; every Step we set, the Ground gave way, the Snow which was mixed with it made us slip, and had it not been for our Staffs, and our Hands, we must many times have gone down the Precipice. We had an uninterrupted View quite to the Bottom of the Mountain, and the Steepness of the Descent, join'd to the Height where we were, made a View terrible enough to make most People's Heads turn. In short, after climbing with great Labour for four Hours and three Quarters, we got to the Top of the Mountain; from whence we had the Pleasure of beholding Objects of an extraordinary Nature. We were on the Top of a Mountain, which, as well as we could judge, was at least twice as high as Mount *Saleve*, from thence we had a full View of the *Glacieres*. I own to you that I am extremely at a Loss how to give a right Idea of it; as I know no one thing which I have ever seen that has the least Resemblance to it.

The Description which Travellers give of the Seas of *Greenland* seems to come the nearest to it. You must imagine your Lake put in Agitation by a strong Wind, and frozen all at once, perhaps even that would not produce the same Appearance.

The *Glacieres* consist of three large Valleys, that form a kind of Y, the Tail reaches into the *Val d'Aoste*, and the two Horns into the Valley of *Cbamoigny*, the Place where we ascended was between them, from whence we saw plainly the Valley, which forms one of these Horns.

I had unluckily left at *Cbamoigny* a pocket Compass, which

I had carried with me, so that I could not well tell the Bearings as to its Situation; but I believe it to be pretty nearly from North to South. These Valleys, although at the Top of a high Mountain, are surrounded with other Mountains; the Tops of which being naked and craggy Rocks, shoot up immensely high; something resembling old *Gothic* Buildings or Ruines, nothing grows upon them, they are all the Year round covered with Snow; and our Guides assured us, that neither the *Chamois*, nor any Birds, ever went so high as the Top of them.

Those who search after Crystal, go in the Month of *August* to the Foot of these Rocks, and strike against them with Pick-axes; if they hear them resound as if they were hollow, they work there, and opening the Rock, they find Caverns full of Crystalisations. We should have been very glad to have gone there, but the Season was not enough advanced, the Snow not being yet sufficiently melted. As far as our Eye-sight could reach, we saw nothing but this Valley; the Height of the Rocks, which surrounded it, made it impossible for the Eye to judge exactly how wide it was; but I imagine it must be near three Quarters of a League. Our Curiosity did not stop here, we were resolved to go down upon the Ice; we had about four hundred Yards to go down, the Descent was excessively steep, and all of a dry crumbling Earth, mixt with Gravel, and little loose Stones, which afforded us no firm footing; so that we went down partly falling, and partly sliding on our Hands and Knees. At length we got upon the Ice, where our Difficulty ceased, for that was extremely rough, and afforded us good footing; we found in it an infinite number of Cracks, some we could step over, others were several Feet wide. These Cracks were so

deep, that we could not even see to the Bottom ; those who go in search of Crystal are often lost in them, but their Bodies are generally found again after some Days, perfectly well preserved. All our Guides assured us, that these Cracks change continually, and that the whole *Glaciere* has a kind of Motion. In going up the Mountain we often heard something like a Clap of Thunder, which, as we were informed by our Guides, was caused by fresh Cracks then making ; but as there were none made while we were upon the Ice, we could not determine whether it was that, or *Avalanches* of Snows, or perhaps Rocks falling ; though since Travellers observe, that in *Greenland* the Ice cracks with a Noise that resembles Thunder, it might very well be what our Guides told us. As in all Countries of Ignorance People are extremely superstitious, they told us many strange Stories of Witches, &c. who came to play their Pranks upon the *Glacieres*, and dance to the Sound of Instruments. We should have been surpris'd if we had not been entertained in these Parts, with some such idle Legends. The *Bouquetins* go in Herds often to the Number of fifteen or sixteen upon the Ice, we saw none of them ; there were some *Chamois* which we shot at, but at too great a Distance to do any Execution.

There is Water continually issuing out of the *Glacieres*, which the People look on as so very wholesome, that they say it may be drank of in any Quantities without Danger, even when one is hot with Exercise.

The Sun shone very hot, and the Reverberation of the Ice, and circumjacent Rocks, caused a great deal of thaw'd Water to lie in all the Cavities of the Ice ; but I fancy it freezes here constantly as soon as Night comes on.

Our Guides assured us, that, in the time of their Fathers, the *Glaciere* was but small, and that there was even a Passage thro' these Valleys, by which they could go into the *Val d'Aoste* in six Hours: But that the *Glaciere* was so much increased, that the Passage was then quite stopped up, and that it went on increasing every Year.

We found on the Edge of the *Glaciere* several Pieces of Ice, which we took at first for Rocks, being as big as a House; these were pieces quite separate from the *Glaciere*. It is difficult to conceive how they came to be formed there.

Having remained about half an Hour upon the *Glaciere*, and having drank there in Ceremony Admiral *Vernon's* Health, and success to the *British* Arms, we climb'd to the Summit, from whence we came, with incredible Difficulty, the Earth giving way at every step we set. From thence, after having rested ourselves a few Minutes, we began to descend, and arrived at *Chamouny* just about Sun-set, to the great Astonishment of all the People of the Place, and even of our Guides, who owned to us they thought we should not have gone through with our Undertaking.

Our Curiosity being fully satisfied, we left *Chamouny* the next Day, and lying at *Salanches*, we got the 23^d to *Bonneville*. The Nearness of this Place to the *Maule* raised in us an Inclination to go up it. We set about this Task the next Day early in the Morning; we fancied that after the *Glacieres* every Mountain would be easy to us, however it took us more than five Hours hard Labour in getting up; the Ascent being extremely steep; though, after two thirds of the Way, there is a fine green Turf quite up to the Top, which ends in a Point, the Mountain being like a Sugar-Loaf on one Side, and quite perpendicular on that Part which lies farthest

from *Geneva*. From this Point there is a most delightful View, on one Side, upon the Lake, *Geneva*, and the adjacent Parts; on the other, upon high Mountains cover'd with Snow, which rise around, in form of an Amphitheatre, and make a most Picturesque Prospect. After having stay'd some time here, we returned back, and went on to *Annecy*, where we lay, from whence the next Day we got to *Geneva*.

Those who are desirous to undertake this Journey, ought not to set out till towards the Middle of *August*; they would at that time find not so much Snow on the Mountain. They might go to the Crystal Mines, and divert themselves with shooting of *Bouquetins*; the Oats would then be cut, and their Horses would not suffer so much. Although we met with nothing which had the Appearance of Danger, nevertheless I would recommend going well armed; 'tis an easy Precaution, and on certain Occasions very useful, one is never the worse for it, and oftentimes it helps a Man out of a Scrape. Barometers to measure the Height of the Mountains, portable Thermometers, and a Quadrant to take Heights with, would be useful, if there were a Mathematician in Company. A Tent would not be necessary, unless for those who had a Mind to examine every thing with the greatest Exactness, and make Observations; in this Case one might pitch it upon the Mountain, and pass the Night in it, if it were necessary, for it did not seem very cold there.

With these Precautions one might go through the other Parts of these Valleys, which form the Y, and one might find out whether the Cracks change daily as we were told; one might also Measure those excessive high Rocks which are on the Side of the *Glaciere*, and make many other curious Observations, according to the Taste and Genius of the Travellers;

who, if they were inclined to Botany, might find an ample Field of Amusement.

One who understood Drawing might find wherewithal to imploy himself, either on the Road, or in the Place itself; in short, a Man of Genius might do many things which we have not done. All the Merit we can pretend to is having opened the way to others who may have Curiosity of the same kind.

It would be right to take Victuals ready drefs'd, and Salt Meat, Bread and Wine, for there are some Places where one can get no Provisions, and the little there is to be had in other Places, is very bad. We bought a Sheep, which we killed, and dressed upon the Spot.

It is necessary to carry Halters to tie the Horses, cut Shoes, Nails, Hammer, &c. for they lose their Shoes continually in those stoney Roads.

With such Precautions all kinds of Journeys become easy and agreeable, even in the most desert Countries, and one is then more in a Condition to observe with Care and Accuracy, whatever occurs worth Notice.

This is the Substance, Sir, of what I can recollect of our Journey. My having so long defer'd giving you this Account is owing to the Incapacity I found in myself to say any thing worth being presented to a Person of so good a Taste as yourself. However, upon the whole, 'tis your good Taste which ought to encourage me: Your lively and penetrating Imagination, which unites in one, both the Poet and Painter, will at once lay hold and perfect what I have but slightly sketched. I am, with the greatest Esteem,

S I R,

Your most Obedient Humble Servant .

The letter which follows the above—that of Mr. Peter Martel—contains more scientific details. He commences by telling Mr. Windham that he went to Chamouni with some friends,

“whose Curiosity had been raised by reading your Letter, which has been liked by all People of Taste;”

and then gives the result of many accurate and clever thermometrical and barometrical observations. These we need not follow : but here and there an interesting paragraph can be picked out. The ordinary guides and guide-books to Montanvert point out a large stone on the edge of the Mer de Glace, called the *Rocher des Anglais*, inscribed with the names of Pococke and Windham, who are legended to have dined here on their first visit. A year or two ago some shepherds lighted a fire on it and split it. It seems that it was Mr. Peter Martel who here refreshed himself, as Mr. Windham says nothing about it, but the former thus writes :—

“In order to find a Place to Dine in we descended towards the Ice, and got behind a kind of Mound, of great Stones which the Ice had raised. In this Place we dressed our Viçtuals, and dined under the Shade of a great Rock. The Thermometer was got down to only one Degree above the freezing Point.”

This was in August, 1742. Mr. Martel made some

tolerably correct plans, and took some sketches ; and what with his own observations, and the information of the guides, collected a quantity of excellent notes about the natural wonders of the valley. His physiology of the glaciers especially was carefully and ingeniously laid down ; and he thus concludes ;

“ Before I quit *Chamouny*, I'll say a Word concerning its natural History. The Inhabitants of this Country are very good sort of People, living together in great Harmony, they are robust, live to a great Age, and have very few Beggars among them ; they don't begin to cultivate their Lands till the Spring, after the Snows are melted, which is sometimes at the End of *April*, and sometimes at the End of *May* ; then they begin to Plough, and Sow their Grains, such as Rye, Barley, Oats, Beans and Buckwheat, which they reap in *September*. And of all these Grains they make a kind of Cake, which is very hard, because they dry it in the Sun after it is baked, and they preserve it thus many Months. They don't make use of Wheat but for Children, and that in very little Quantity. 'Tis surprizing to see how the Mountains are cultivated, in places that are almost perpendicular, where they Plough and Sow as cleverly as can be done on the Plains. This we first observed near *Salanches*. Fruits ripen very late in this Country, for we saw Cherries there which were not quite ripe, and we found Flowers and Fruits on the Mountain, which are never seen with us but in the Spring. We observed, as we were going up the Mountain, a fine clear Mineral Water, partaking of Iron and Sulphur, it is very delicious and cool ; their Honey is white

resembling very much that of *Narbonne* for Colour, but no. for Taste. The Sheep which are kept near the *Glacier* lick the Ice, which serves them for drink; they are left without any one to watch them, there being in this Valley no Beast of Prey, though Bears, Wolves, and Foxes abound in the Country all about. Nothing inhabits here but *Chamois*, *Bouquetins*, who keep in the high Mountains, and a great Quantity of *Marmotes*; this is the Account the Inhabitants gave us of this Animal. They sleep six Months of the Year, that is, all Winter, and in the Summer they provide a warm Couch against their time of Sleeping; for this End they cut Herbs with their Teeth, and in order to carry them to their Holes one of them lays on its Back, and the others load it like a Cart, and then drag it by the Ears to the Hole. They pretend also that they provide against being surpris'd, by placing Centinels, who give them the Alarm by a whistling Noise; they eat these *Marmotes*, and find them very good, and use their Fat to burn in Lamps; there are no Birds of Prey in this Valley, nor Crows, neither are there ever any Swallows. I observed a remarkable kind of Grasshopper, much resembling a Dragon Fly, with long Legs. We staid at *Chamouny* from *Tuesday* Evening to *Thursday* Morning; but I could make no more Experiment with my Barometer, because it had been damaged. We went from thence, and lay at *Cluse*, and from that Place to the Mountain called the *Maulé*, which I look upon to be somewhat higher than *Montanver*, because we were half an Hour longer in going up it, although the Road is very even, as well as steeper. I wished to have had my Barometer to take the Height of it, but I was forced to content myself when I got up to the Top to observe the Angle of Position of the *Glacieres*, with respect

to *Geneva*, which I found to be 158 Degrees precisely. I looked down on all the Objects about us with great Pleasure; the Prospect put me in mind of that fine Plan which you have seen in our Public Library, for the Plain below, seen from this high Mountain, at first Sight gives one the same Idea. 'Tis wonderful to see those Places, which we take to be nothing but high Mountains, divided by fine and fertile Valleys, covered with all Sorts of Trees and Fruit, an infinite Number of Villages, which being in deep Bottoms, appear from thence to be situated in a rural and agreeable Manner. In a Word, all the Pains I took to clamber up this Mountain were sufficiently recompenced by a Prospect so beautiful and so uncommon. After having stayed in this Situation about half an Hour, we went down again, and continued our Journey. We lay at *Contamines*, from whence we arrived at *Geneva*, Saturday Morning the 26th, all vastly well satisfied with our Journey, and without any other regret than not having stayed longer at *Chamouny*, to have considered the Beauties of the Places thereabouts. Those who may hereafter be desirous to undertake this troublesome and curious Journey, ought to add to the Precautions which we have pointed out, that of employing more time in it, and, if possible, to come round by *Switzerland*, which would be very easy from *Chamouny*. Nothing could be more agreeable than this Journey, by reason of the Rarity and Variety of Views which continually occur."

Mr. Peter Martel adds a quaint old copperplate print of "Y^e Ice Valley and Mountains that surround it from Mount Anver," in which a few well known points can be traced: he also gives a map

of the course of the Arve, a view of Chamouni, and the "effigies" of the Chamois, the Bouquetin, and the Marmotte. And that his sensible narrative, may further serve him, he adds the following

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By M. *PETER MARTEL*, of *Geneva*, Engineer.

At the *Grey Head* in *Queen Street, Soho*; to be heard of likewise at
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Where may be had,

His *PLAN* of the City and Fortifications of *Geneva*, and the adjacent Parts, as they were in the Year 1743.

He also makes and sells Pocket and other *Thermometers*, with several Improvements, and the different graduations of *Fahrenheit*, *Reaumur*, *Sir Isaac Newton*, *Dr. Hales*, and others, placed in such a Manner on the Instrument, as to be easily compared one with the other.

CHAPTER III.

DE SAUSSURE.

WHILST Mr. Windham was awaiting some companion to join him in his first journey to Chamouni, Horace Benedict de Saussure was born at Geneva, on the 17th of February, 1740.

His father, Nicolas de Saussure, also a Genevese, was already well known as the author of several excellent treatises on subjects connected with agriculture. Placed in the college of Geneva, the young Horace made such progress, that soon after he was of age, he was appointed Professor of natural philosophy, in the college: and he held this honourable post for twenty-five years, interrupted only by his travels in search of physical and especially geological knowledge. The events of his life are consequently few; and the substance of them may be best given in his own words:—

“ I had a decided passion for mountains from my

infancy. At the age of eighteen I had already been several times over the mountains nearest to Geneva; but these were of comparatively little elevation, and by no means satisfied my curiosity. I felt an intense desire to view more closely the High Alps, which, as seen from the summits of these lower mountains, appear so majestic. At length, in 1760, alone and on foot, I visited the glacier of Chamouni, then little frequented, and the ascent of which was regarded not only as difficult but dangerous. I went there again the following year; and from that time I have not allowed a single year to elapse without making considerable excursions, and even long journeys, for the purpose of studying mountains. In the course of that period I have traversed the entire chain of the Alps fourteen times by eight different routes. I have made sixteen other excursions to the central parts of the mountain mass. I have gone over the Jura, the Vosges, the mountains of Switzerland and of part of Germany, those of England, of Italy, and of Sicily and the adjacent islands. I have visited the ancient volcanoes of Auvergne, a part of the Vivarais, several of the mountains of Forez, of Dauphiné, and of Burgundy. All these journeys I have made with the mineralogist's hammer in my hand, with no other aim than the study of natural phenomena, clambering up to every accessible summit that promised anything

of interest, and always returning with specimens of the minerals and mountains, especially such as afforded confirmations or contradictions of any theory, in order that I might examine and study them at my leisure. I also imposed upon myself the severe task of always making notes upon the spot, and, whenever it was practicable, of writing out my observations in full within the twenty-four hours."

This sketch of De Saussure's travels and labours extends from 1758 till 1779. In addition it deserves to be particularly mentioned, that in 1787 he ascended to the top of Mont Blanc, and remained there three hours and a half making observations; in 1788, accompanied by his eldest son, he encamped for seventeen days on the summit of the Col du Géant, at an elevation of 11,170 feet, for the purpose of studying meteorological phenomena; and in 1789 he reached the summit of Mont Rosa in the Pennine Alps, which was the last ascent of importance which he performed.

De Saussure resigned his professorship in 1786. He was afterwards a member of the Council of Two Hundred of Geneva; and when that republic was united to France in 1798 he was for some time a member of the National Assembly. The French Revolution, however, deprived him of almost all his property, which had been deposited in the public funds. An

organic disease had begun to develop itself when he was about fifty (probably in consequence of his exertions and privations among the Alps), which, combined with the loss of his property, and the anxiety and distress which he suffered from the convulsions of his country, carried him off at the age of fifty-nine. He died on the 23rd of January, 1799.



DE SAUSSURE.

De Saussure kept up a correspondence with many of the distinguished literary men of his time : he was a member of the Académie des Sciences of Paris, and of several other of the scientific societies of Europe ; and he was the founder of the Society for the Advancement of the Arts at Geneva, which is still in a flourishing state.

The labours of De Saussure in geology are of a character to secure for his name a just and enduring reputation. Physical geology, the research after the causes of geological phenomena, found in him a diligent and discriminating observer, unbiassed by the many speculations of his day, but looking forward, through the results of diligent inquiry into facts, to an improved condition of theory. Less speculative than De Luc, more philosophical than Werner, more original than either, he has had few disciples ; but modern geologists have largely imbibed the adventurous spirit which carried him round all the precipices and through all the defiles of the Alps, and may yet copy with advantage the calm and correct induction which he applied to the complicated disorder of the strata in these mountains.*

I have anticipated some of our dates in this short biographical notice of one whose name will ever be

* Penny Cyclopædia.

indissolubly connected with Mont Blanc. I will now take up our history once more.

During the twenty years that followed the visit of Mr. Windham and his friends, very few travellers appeared at Chamouni. The majority of those who did undertake the excursion were Englishmen ; and they lodged generally with the curé. In 1760 De Saussure first arrived in the valley, alone, and then there was not a decent inn—a few miserable cabarets, of the lowest order, scarcely offered a bed to the weary travellers. The young philosopher usually lodged with Madame Couteran, the widow of a notary. She was a very honest woman. Her house was very clean, and all who patronized it were well treated, at a moderate price. Her son-in-law, M. Charlet, was the chief magistrate—the syndic of the village. He appears to have been singularly well educated, and capable of communicating every local matter of interest to strangers. He also received travellers when Madame Couteran's house was full. "But now," says De Saussure, writing in 1786, "the trip has gradually become so fashionable, that three spacious and excellent inns have been successively established, scarcely able to contain the crowd of strangers who come hither in the summer from all parts of the globe."

What would the good Genevese have said, at this

present time, when a casino and *rouge-et-noir* table have just been suppressed by the Sardinian authorities in the heart of the village ; when London porter and Burton ale, and Burgess's Essence of Anchovies, are found on the dinner-tables of the excellent hotels,* where the traveller may read the *Illustrated London News*, or the *Journal des Debats*, at his breakfast, to say nothing of *Galignani*; and when Manchester prints and Birmingham pins attract the peasants, laid out on the weekly stall of the wandering chapman from Geneva or Martigny !

* It may be mentioned here, that the present Hôtel de Londres is the oldest establishment in the Valley. It dates from the visit of Pococke and Windham. These two travellers rested in a little cabaret, owned by Jean Pierre Tairraz, grandfather of the present innkeeper, M. Edouard Tairraz. There was no sign to this humble hostel, but merely a bush hung over the door, and Mr. Windham suggested that the name, "Hôtel de Londres" should be painted up. This was done, and it attracted most of the English visitors who did not find quarters with the curé. One of the Couterans opposed Jean Tairraz, calling his house the "Hôtel d'Angleterre ; but finally Tairraz combined the two names into one, as it now stands.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE FIRST ADVENTURERS ON MONT BLANC.

FOR some time, during his earlier visits to the Valley of Chamouni, De Saussure felt convinced that the summit of Mont Blanc was inaccessible. He made it generally known that he would handsomely reward any one who discovered a practicable route to the summit, and even offered to pay the day's wages of all those who attempted the ascent unsuccessfully. Nothing, however, came of this. His guide, Pierre Simon, tried twice; once by the Tacul, passing up the glacier, and once by the Glacier des Bossons, but returned without a hope of ultimate success. Nevertheless, in 1775, four Chamouni peasants started with the intention of trying to reach the summit by the mountain of *La Côte*—the ridge which divides the Glacier des Bossons from that of Taconnay. These got on tolerably well for a short distance; but, on entering a vast valley of snow, which appeared to lead

directly to the summit, they suffered so acutely from a feeling of heat and suffocation, that, coupled with general nausea and utter exhaustion, they were compelled, without having encountered any actual practical difficulty, to return.*

This ill success did not deter others from venturing in their turn. In 1783, three other guides, named Jean Marie Coutet, Lombard Meunier, and Joseph Carrier, took the same route, passing the night on the summit of La Côte, and following the same valley of snow, which lay, in all probability, between the Grands Mulets, and the Aiguilles du Midi, and Sans Nom. They had attained a great elevation, when the hardest and most robust of the party was seized with an insurmountable drowsiness. He begged the others to continue their journey, and leave him there to go to sleep. Of course, this was not acceded to; they gave up their attempt, and returned to Chamouni. One of them, Lombard Meunier, affirmed that the sun almost scorched him—that they had no appetite to eat even a crumb; and that, if he tried the excursion again, he should only take with him a parasol and a bottle of scent. The thought of this bold mountaineer crossing the mighty glacier, with a parasol in one hand, and a smelling-bottle in the other, appeared to De Saussure

* I have thought it best, in the account of these early enterprises, to follow De Saussure's careful history.

so absolutely ridiculous, that he avows nothing gave him a greater notion of the difficulty of the undertaking.

De Saussure's friend, M. Bourrit, of Geneva, an enthusiastic traveller, and an able artist, had slept at the summit of La Côte, towards the close of the same season; when a sudden storm drove him back, at the very edge of the glacier. But, as we shall see, he was not easily discouraged. At this period he really appears to have taken more interest in the matter than De Saussure himself, for he was indefatigable in collecting every detail at all relating to the journey. Two chamois hunters had reported that in the pursuit of game they had climbed from one range of rock to another until they believed they had reached a point not more than 3000 feet below the summit, whence the slope was easy, and so open and airy that there appeared little to fear from the suffocation which had frightened their predecessors. Delighted at the discovery, M. Bourrit hastened to the village where the hunters lived, and engaged them at once for a fresh attempt; he even started off at night, in his impatience, and arrived at daybreak at the foot of the steep rock he was to climb—I expect the Aiguille du Bionnassay. The morning was uncommonly cold, and what with the frost and the fatigue, poor M.

Bourrit was now completely exhausted, and could not go on. One of the guides remained with him whilst the other went on, not only to the summit of the rocks, but a great way in advance of the snow. They stated on their return that they had actually reached the foot of the actual dome of Mont Blanc, from which they were only separated by a ravine of ice. They also affirmed, that had they only had a little time and a little assistance, they could have cut steps in the ice, and easily gained the summit.

All this was very good news for De Saussure, on M. Bourrit's return, and he at once determined to try the new route as soon as the weather was favourable ; but the country people whom he had appointed to watch the state of the snow, gave him no hopes until the autumn of 1785. He wished to go alone with his guides, but M. Bourrit, still enthusiastic, was so anxious to be of the party, that De Saussure, in consideration of his having really, in some degree, established the route, consented to take him into his caravan, together with his (M. Bourrit's) son—a young man just of age, whose scientific attainments were of no ordinary character. De Saussure's first intention was to encamp under a tent, at the greatest possible elevation ; but M. Bourrit, with much forethought, sent some men ahead, a day or two before the party started, to build a rude cabin of granite blocks near

the base of the Aiguille du Gouté, sheltered alike from the weather and the avalanches.

All things being ready, De Saussure came from Geneva, and M. Bourrit from Chamouni; and they met at the village of Bionnassay, by appointment, on the 12th of September, 1785. There was no inn at this poor place; but they were recommended to one of the inhabitants, named Battandier, who was better located than the peasants generally. This simple, honest fellow appears to have received them with all cordiality. He gave them beds of clean fresh straw, and they passed an excellent night.

Early the next morning the party set off along the side of the torrent, which flows from the glacier of Bionnassay; and, after a tolerably easy climb of five hours, they reached the cabin erected for them, on a sheltered ledge at the foot of the Aiguille du Gouté. Here they passed the night. This lodging was about eight feet long, by seven broad, and four in height. The walls were formed of flat stones, placed one on the other without cement, and some fir branches made the roof. Two mattresses were put on the ground for beds, and an open parasol set against the entrance formed a door. M. Bourrit, with his son, was affected by the rarefaction of the air, and could not eat anything. De Saussure passed an excellent night. He says:—"As night came on, the



sky was completely pure and cloudless. The stars, brilliant indeed, but unscintillating, cast a pale light over the summits of the mountain peaks, sufficient to define their size and distance. The repose and dead silence which reigned in this immeasurable space, increased by the imagination, inspired me almost with terror. It appeared as though I was left living alone in the world, and that I saw its corpse at my feet. * * *

I either slept lightly and calmly; or my thoughts were so bright and peaceful that I was sorry to slumber. When the parasol was not before the door, I could see, from my bed, the snow, the ice, and the rocks below the cabin; and the rising of the moon gave the most singular appearance to the view. Some of the guides passed the night crouching in the

hollows of the rock, others on the ground, enveloped in cloaks and wrappers, and some kept watch around a small fire, fed with the wood they had carried up with them."

M. Bourrit had suffered so from the cold at day-break on his previous journey, that the party did not leave the cabin until past six, when they started in high spirits. Their route was exceedingly steep, and even dangerous, as they climbed the Aiguille du Goûté, over treacherous snow-drifts and loose blocks of ice : and these obstacles increased to such an extent, that after five hours of climbing, one of the guides—Pierre Balmat—proposed a halt, whilst he went on to reconnoitre the state of the snow. In an hour he returned, and said that the snow was in such a treacherous state, it would not be advisable to proceed. It was with great regret that the attempt was abandoned. De Saussure made some valuable barometrical observations however, and consoled himself with the thought that he had been higher than any other traveller in Europe. They regained their cabin in safety. M. Bourrit, with his son, started off at once for Bionnassay, not relishing another night at this elevation ; but De Saussure remained to make several more interesting experiments, and the next day descended to Salanches. This was the last expedition made before the discovery of the true route to the summit.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST ASCENT OF MONT BLANC.



WE are now approaching the date when, in all human probability, the foot of man was placed, for the first time, upon the crown of Mont Blanc.

In the belief that the obstacles which the state of the snows had offered to his progress, were the result only of the advanced season, De Saussure determined to follow up his enterprise, by the same route—that of the Aiguille du Goûté—the next year. He therefore engaged Pierre Balmat to build up a stone cabin on one of the shelves of the Aiguille, ready for the attempt; and to watch carefully the state of the snow when the summer came round again.

In the execution of this project, Pierre Balmat, Marie Coutet, and another guide, climbed up the

Aiguille on the 8th of June 1786, and reached the top of the Dome du Goûté, with great toil and pain, suffering acutely from the rarefaction of the air. Here they fell in with François Paccard, and three other guides, who had ascended by La Côte—the ridge of mountain that divides the lower part of the Glacier des Bossons from that of Taconnay. This rendezvous had been agreed upon, in order that they might see which road was the most advantageous. The preference was given to La Côte, inasmuch as Paccard's party reached the Dome du Goûté a good hour and a half before the others, with infinitely less danger and fatigue. Uniting their forces they traversed a large plain of snow, and gained a huge ridge which connected the top of Mont Blanc with the Dome du Goûté; but this was so steep and narrow that its passage was impossible. They investigated every portion of the plain, and coming to the conclusion that, as far as this route was concerned, the summit of Mont Blanc appeared more inaccessible than ever, they sulkily returned by La Côte, to Chamouni, harassed by a fearful storm of snow and hail, in which they were nearly lost.

It so happened that one of Paccard's party, named Jacques Balmat,—who appears just at this time not to have been very popular in the valley,—had presented himself without invitation, and followed them



against their will. When they turned to descend they did not tell this poor man of their intention. Being on unfriendly terms with them, he had kept aloof; and whilst stopping to search for some crystals, under a rock, he lost sight of them, just as the snow began to fall, which rapidly obliterated their traces.

The storm increased, and not daring to expose himself to the dangers of a solitary descent in the darkness, he resolved to spend the night, alone, in the centre of this desert of ice, and at an elevation of *fourteen thousand* feet above the level of the sea!

He had no food, and was but poorly clad; night was rapidly coming on, and the frozen flakes fell more heavily every minute. He therefore got under the lee of one of the rocks, and contrived to heap up against it sufficient snow to form a kind of niche, into

which he crept, and blockaded himself as well as he was able, from the storm. And there—an atom on the ghastly and immeasurable waste of eternal frost that extended on every side around him, in awful unearthly silence, unbroken by any sound from the remote living world—half dead already from the piercing cold, and with limbs inflamed and stiffened by the labour he had already undergone, he passed the long uncertain hours of that terrible night.

At last morning broke. Far away in the east Balmat saw its earliest lights rising behind the giants of the Bernese Oberland who guarded the horizon, and one after another the Jungfrau, Eiger and the Finsteraarhorn stood out bright and sharp in the clear cold air. The storm had cleared altogether; the morning was calm and mild; comparatively so even at that elevation; and as Balmat painfully endeavoured to move his almost paralyzed limbs into action, he found that his feet had lost all sensation—they were frostbitten! He could, however, move them, and without pain. The night frost had hardened the snow; presently the sunlight came down the top of Mont Blanc to the Dome du Gouté, and then, still keeping up his courage through everything, this brave fellow determined to devote the day to surveying the mountain, and seeing if any practicable course to the summit presented itself on the vast and hitherto untrodden deserts of snow. His courage was rewarded: he

found that if the crevices that border the Grand Plateau were once crossed, the path to the top of Mont Blanc was clear and unbroken before him, and he then traced out the route, which has, with little variation, been followed ever since, and which appears to be, beyond doubt, the only practicable one.

Balmat returned that evening to Chamouni, and his energy was all exhausted by the time he reached the village. He took to his bed immediately, and did not leave it for weeks. Nobody knew of his success. He kept his secret close, until, moved with gratitude to Dr. Paccard, the village physician, for his great care and attention, the line of road was hinted at, and an attempt agreed upon as soon as Balmat recovered.

On the 7th of August following, these two stout hearts started alone. They took the route by La Côte, and slept there, on the summit of the mountain, and at the edge of the glacier, about 9000 feet above the level of the sea. Before daybreak the next morning, they were on the march again, and entered on the immense fields of ice, at the junction of the Bossons and Tacconay glaciers. At three o'clock in the afternoon they were yet uncertain as to the result of the enterprize. Paccard suffered severely from fatigue and cold, but Balmat was unremitting in his assistance and endeavours to keep up the courage of his companion.

At last, after encountering and surmounting marvellous obstacles in the way of ice-cliffs and crevices, they arrived at the summit about sunset. Here they waited half an hour, in full view of a vast number of the Chamouniards, who had climbed the Breven opposite to watch their progress; and then returning got back to their night bivouac, where they again slept, by midnight. On the following morning, the 9th, they reached Chamouni in safety, by eight o'clock. They were entirely exhausted. Their faces were swollen and excoriated—their eyes nearly closed; and it is said, that for the next week Balmat was scarcely recognisable.

The next day De Saussure was made aware of the fortunate termination of this daring excursion. He directly made up his mind once more to attempt the ascent, and wrote a letter to Jean Pierre Tairraz—the guide already mentioned—conveying his wishes on the subject. M. Edouard Tairraz gave me this autograph document, when I was at Chamouni last autumn, and it is now in my possession. I have great pleasure in laying it before my readers:—

[TRANSLATION.]

“I recommend to you, my dear Jean Pierre, Madame la Comtesse de Sannazari and her suite. After visiting the curiosities of Chamouni, she wishes

to hire some mules, to return to Italy by the Simplon or the Gries ; and I have advised her to come to you, and take your mules for the whole journey, rather than hire fresh ones from place to place, which was her original design. I hope that you will serve her well, both as regards the quality of the mules, and their price ; and that I shall have no occasion to make any complaint. If you can let her have your boy, Jean, who accompanied me in some similar journeys, and especially over the Gries, I am sure she will be very well attended.

“ I am very much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken in sending me an express with your letter announcing the fortunate expedition of Doctor Paccard. I am delighted to hear of this, on such good authority. I gave two new crowns to the bearer, and he said that this paid him sufficiently for his trouble.

“ And now I am going to confide a little affair to you, which you must keep quite a secret : I wish to attempt the same route. Not that I flatter myself I shall be able to reach the summit, for I have neither the youth nor the lightness of the Doctor ;* but I can, at all events, get sufficiently high to make some observations and experiments, which will be of great im-

* De Saussure was at this time about 46.

portance. As it appears they had a great deal of trouble to cross the glacier above the Montagne de la Côte, I wish you would send off five or six men at once to level the route as much as is practicable. Pay them good days' wages : I leave the sum to your discretion, and I will repay you at once. It is most essential to procure trustworthy and hard-working men. You can put Jacques Balmat, who accompanied Dr. Paccard, at the head of them, and give him a better payment. They must begin by erecting a hut at the top of the Montagne de la Côte, to which they can retire at night, and during bad weather. This hut will also serve for my resting-place.

“ I also wish them to build another hut, higher up, upon some rock in the middle of the snow ; because the task will be too great for me to go at once from the top of the Montagne de la Côte to the summit. At the same time, I can also sleep there, or find a refuge from bad weather.

“ But, in all this business, I forbid you, most decidedly, to tell them my name. Say everything has been ordered by a great Italian personage, who does not wish to be known. I have most important reasons for my name to be kept secret, and for no one to know that I am thinking about the attempt.

“ I expect to arrive at Chamouni on Thursday or Friday next, and I hope all will be ready by that

time, or, at all events, very forward ; and that there may not be any difficulty, I enclose two double Louis in this letter, to pay the few first days work, and the wine for the men.

“ I should have been, indeed, pleased to have lodged at your house, if my old associations with the good Dame Couteran had not established engagements which I cannot break. But be assured you shall not be a loser by it : and if you will execute my commissions with promptitude, and attend upon me as I wish, I shall not forget it.

“ Moreover, I must beg you to order, at once, a ladder twelve or fifteen feet long, with flat sides. This ladder, laid down, will be of service in crossing the chasms in the glaciers ; and, when set up, will be useful in scaling any rock or cliff of ice. It must be very firm, and yet sufficiently light for one man to carry. By its means, the workmen will have no occasion to make long detours, nor to cut the ice, wherever the crevice is no longer than the ladder ; so it is necessary that they take one with them of this length at starting. They will know how to get on with it, whether its poles and steps are round or otherwise ; but they must make my one with the steps flat, as it will suit me better to walk on.

“ If the weather is not very good, the men can still begin to build the hut at the top of the Mon-

tagne de la Côte, as near as possible to the edge of the ice. In case there should not be any flat stones, they can build it of pine branches, with the leaves on. When they are well and thickly set together, they will keep out the cold, and even the rain.

"I could entrust several other people at Chamouni with this commission ; but I well know your zeal and intelligence, and I hope that my confidence has been well placed. Moreover, if success should crown my attempt, I shall publish an account of it, and I shall not fail to give all due honour to the share you have had in the affair, which will add greatly to your reputation as well as to that of your inn.

"Je suis, mon cher Jean Pierre, votre bien affectionné,

"DE SAUSSURE, Professeur."

Geneva, Sunday, 13 August, 1786.

[There then comes a postscript, written very clearly and with great care, evidently meant to have been cut off and put in the hands of the chief guide.]

"Recollect, this is the commission, in a few words, which you have to execute for the Italian nobleman :—

- "1. To order a portable ladder, with flat sides, and fifteen feet long.

- "2. To choose a sufficient number of brave workmen, who will start at once to build a good hut on the summit of the Montagne de la Côte, close to the glacier, in stone, or pine branches with the leaves on. *
- "3. Let them at first take a common ladder with them, fifteen feet long ; and when they have finished the hut, they must try and facilitate the passage of the glacier, by cutting steps or levelling the ridges of the ice, especially where the crevices are too large to allow anybody to cross on the ladder.
- "4. After they have arranged this, let them build another hut, upon some rock two thirds or three fourths of the distance between the first hut and the top of the mountain.

"N.B.—You must settle beforehand with the workmen about their wages, at so much a day, promising them a good *tringuelt* (sic) if I am content with their work."

De Saussure arrived at Chamouni, as he had promised ; and Tairraz and his party set to work. But bad weather came on, the snow was found too treacherous, and rain set in without intermission. He therefore gave up the attempt until the following

year, leaving to Jacques Balmat* the task of watching the state of the mountain, and communicating with him when it was considered assailable.

* Balmat's career, and death at an advanced age, was somewhat remarkable. De Saussure, in some of his investigations, had discovered some grains of gold-dust amongst the grit of the Arveiron—the torrent which flows from the ice of the Glacier du Bois—the *Mer de Glace*, as we more popularly know it. Not having the time to remain at Chamouni to pursue his search, he ordered twelve mules to be laden with the river grit and driven to Geneva. Old Jean Pierre Tairraz provided the mules, and Balmat was their *conducteur* on the occasion. He attached so great an importance to the object of this caravan, that nothing afterwards dissuaded him from the notion of some enormous fortune that De Saussure made in consequence; and from that time but one thought occupied his mind—that of seeking for gold. He explored, alone, some of the most dangerous solitudes of the Alps, and at last died alone amongst them. His baton, with a broken cord attached to it, was found at the edge of an enormous crevice by some chamois hunters, but nothing more was ever known respecting his fate.

CHAPTER VI.

DE SAUSSURE VANQUISHES MONT BLANC.

DE SAUSSURE passed the winter of 1786-7 in Provence, engaged in his philosophical pursuits, pleasantly enough. He had learned that Mont Blanc was assailable, and he quietly awaited Balmat's message as to the proper season for him to make the trial.

The sturdy guide made two excursions in June, 1787, without success: but he saw various prognostics in the phenomena of the glacier world of the happiest augury. Accordingly, he wrote to De Saussure, who met him at Sallanche in July, and heard that, a few days previously, he had again reached the summit with two other peasants, Jean Michel Cachat and Alexis Tournier. This ascent, oddly enough, has never been chronicled in the published lists of the successes. When De Saussure got to Chamouni bad weather came on and continued for a month; but he

resolutely resolved to wait there—were it even to the end of the season.

At last, the long-desired chance arrived. On the 3rd of August, this excellent and indefatigable man fulfilled the ardent wish of his life; and, accompanied by his servant and eighteen guides, arrived at the summit of Mont Blanc.* His son was most anxious to accompany him; but De Saussure mistrusted his powers to undergo the great fatigue, and therefore the young man remained at Chamouni with Madame de Saussure and his two sisters. They followed the advance of the courageous party, step by step, through telescopes.

The route taken by De Saussure differed slightly from that now adopted by travellers. The Glacier

* De Saussure has left the names of his guides, as follows. It will be seen they were all Chamouniards *par sang*.

Jacques Balmat, called <i>Mont-Blanc</i> .	Alexis Balmat.
Pierre Balmat }	Jean Louis Devouassoud.
Marie Coutet } his usual guides.	Jean Michel }
Jacques Balmat, Madame Coute-	Michel } Devouassoud, bro-
ran's servant.	François } thers.
Jean Michel Cachat, called <i>Le Géant</i> .	Pierre }
Jean Baptiste Lombard, called <i>Jorasse</i> .	François Couttet.
Alexis Tournier.	François Ravanet.
	Pierre François Favret.
	Jean Pierre Cachat.
	Jean Michel Tournier.

The guides with the nicknames were so called because they had ascended the points which the *sobriquets* indicate.

des Bossons lies in a steep valley, between two ridges of rock. That to the left is formed by one of the huge buttresses of the Aiguille du Midi; and the ascent is now commenced through the steep Forêt des Pelerins, which clothes its lower side. The ridge to the right is called the Montagne de la Côte, and separates the glaciers of Taconnay and Bossons. Along this latter ridge, De Saussure's caravan commenced the ascent. There was little difficulty or danger in the early part of the journey. They were sure of their footsteps, being either on the grass or the rock itself; and they reached the highest point of the mountain—about 6000 feet above Chamouni, and 9500 feet over the level of the sea—in about six hours.

De Saussure was fortunate in the time selected for the ascent. The weather was most favourable, and the snow compact and hard. He encamped, with his party, the first night alone, in the edge of the glacier, on the Montagne de la Côte, under a tent. The remains of his old hut were still there; but he preferred the tent, because it left him more at liberty to choose his resting-place wherever he chose.

They started on the ice, the next morning, at half-past six. De Saussure was anxious to be on the way long before this; but there was a protracted squabble amongst the guides about carrying the luggage; not

so much on the score of fatigue as from the danger of breaking through the snow from the additional weight of the load. They encountered a great many difficulties amongst the crevices of the glacier, and De Saussure nearly lost the stand of his barometer, through the carelessness of his servant; it fell from his hand, and, gliding rapidly along the snow, went down a chasm, and stuck in the ice at a considerable depth. This stand was part of the apparatus attached to a compass, a telescope, and several other philosophical instruments; and, observing his chagrin at the loss, one of the guides allowed himself to be let down the crevice by a cord, which was tied under his arms, and so recovered it.

They crossed the glacier until they reached "*une petite chaine de rocs enclavés dans les neiges*," which must have been the present Grands Mulets. Here they had breakfast at nine o'clock; and the guides again made a long delay. They were not over-anxious to bivouac on an unknown waste of snow, as was their employer; and, therefore, they tried to put off their departure until it would be too late to venture, for want of daylight. But De Saussure was firm: he made them start again, and about half-past one they halted, to dine at another rock—the last of the chain. Their appetites were famous; and as they were now 2000 or 3000 feet above the line of eternal

frost, the guides hit upon an ingenious device to procure water. They made up a great quantity of snowballs, and began to pelt the side of the rock opposed to the sun, and therefore warm. Part of the snow stuck to the rock, and speedily melted; and they soon had a reservoir which furnished them with as much water as they needed. Here, again, the guides loitered. The warm and secure rock, in the middle of the ice, was a perfect Island of Calypso for them; and De Saussure was now obliged to join persuasion to command, before they would set off.

Between the Grands Mulets and the summit, Mont Blanc forms three tremendous steps, from 800 to 1000 feet in depth. These are termed Les Montets; and the highest flat surface of the three platforms is known as the Grand Plateau. On the second of these, De Saussure prepared to pass the night, at an elevation of 13,300 feet above the level of the sea. The party arrived here about four in the afternoon, and directly began to excavate a pit in the snow for their lodging. Into this they threw some straw, and the tent was stretched over it. The work was long and painful, for the guides were beginning to experience the effect of the rarefaction of the air at this height. Robust as they were, and caring nothing for their seven or eight hours of climbing, they could scarcely throw up half a dozen shovelfuls of snow

without resting. De Saussure suffered considerably himself; and a raging thirst added to his discomfort. The water they had carried with them was all frozen; and a small charcoal brazier was of little use to supply melted snow for twenty persons.

It now became very cold. The instant the tent was fixed, they all scrambled into the refuge it afforded, and shut up every opening so closely, that at last they nearly suffocated themselves. De Saussure, after a time, could not support the close atmosphere any longer, and crept out into the snow to breathe. The moon was then shining brilliantly, in the middle, as he says, of a jet black sky. Jupiter was peeping over the summit of Mont Blanc, but the light reverberated from the mass of snow about him was so bright, that only the stars of the first and second magnitude could be perceived. Soon, however, it became too cold even for our good philosopher, and he crept back into the tent, and passed but a sorry night—the noise of an avalanche on the Grand Plateau rousing him just as he was dropping off to sleep, and effectually disturbing his repose.

When morning came, they were some time getting ready for departure. They had to melt snow for the water necessary for breakfast and the journey to come. They crossed the Grand Plateau, now covered with the *debris* of the avalanche above alluded to, without

any trouble, except that the rarefaction of the air was beginning to attack their lungs ; and this inconvenience increased at every step. De Saussure was in hopes that a prolonged rest on Rochers Rouges would restore the forces of his party ; but this proved of little advantage. They had not gone a dozen steps before they were compelled to halt again for as long a time as they had been in motion, and in this manner, with great toil and discomfort, they reached the summit.

“ At last,” says De Saussure, “ I had arrived at the long-wished-for end of my desires. As the principal points in the view had been before my eyes for the last two hours of this distressing climb, almost as they would appear from the summit, my arrival was by no means a *coup de théâtre*: it did not even give me the pleasure that one might imagine. My keenest impression was one of joy at the cessation of all my troubles and anxieties ; for the prolonged struggle, and the recollection of the sufferings this victory had cost me, produced rather a feeling of irritation. At the very instant that I stood upon the most elevated point of the summit, I stamped my foot on it more with a sensation of anger than pleasure. Besides, my object was not only to reach the crown of the mountain: I had to make such observations and experiments as would alone give any value to the enterprise,

and I was afraid I should only be able to accomplish a portion of my intentions. I had already found out—even on the plateau where we slept—that every careful observation in such a rarefied atmosphere was fatiguing, because you hold your breath unthinkingly; and as the tenuity of the air is obliged to be compensated for by the frequency of respiration, this suspended breathing causes a sensible feeling of uneasiness. I was compelled to rest and pant as much after regarding one of my instruments attentively, as after having mounted one of the steepest slopes.”

The guides contrived to put up the tent, and they built a sort of table, on which the good professor was to conduct his experiments. But he found he was obliged to stop every moment, and give more attention to his breathing than to his instruments. The barometer was down to sixteen inches, so that the air had not much more than half its ordinary density; and the arteries, no longer restrained by the usual pressure, were working with double energy. The whole party complained more or less of fever. As long as they kept perfectly still, they experienced little uneasiness—only a slight nausea and heartburn; but as soon as they moved, or fixed their attention rigidly on any object, or stooped down so as to compress the chest, they were obliged to repose again, almost gasping, for two or three minutes. They had no appetite, and,

indeed, had they felt at all hungry, the frozen food they had with them was not very tempting. They did not care to touch the wine or the brandy, finding that these only increased their discomforts. Cold water alone relieved them ; and when they had swallowed what little they had with them, one or two of the guides left the summit, and descended at once, unable to bear their sufferings any longer.

De Saussure took some trouble to experimentalize upon the intense blue colour which the sky assumes at great elevations. Before he quitted Geneva, he prepared some sheets of paper of sixteen graduated shades of blue, from the deepest colour to the palest tint, and he numbered these from one to sixteen. He had three sets of these papers made : one he left with his friend M. Senebier at Geneva ; the second he gave to his son, who remained at Chamouni ; and the third he carried with him to the summit. At noon on the day of the ascent the sky at Geneva was of the seventh tint ; at Chamouni, between the fifth and sixth ; and on Mont Blanc, between the first and second—the deepest “*bleu du roi*.” The guides all told him they had seen the stars in the broad daylight ; but he admits himself he could not discern them.

The party remained four hours on the summit. De Saussure found it impossible to make all the experiments he wished within that time ; but it was neces-

sary for them to start, and he left the *magnifique belvédère* (as he terms it) at half-past three in the afternoon.

The snow was now very soft in the sun, and the walking troublesome: but in about an hour and a quarter they came down to their bivouac of the preceding night. As it was still early, De Saussure was unwilling to stay here; and they pushed on, descending the Montets, until they reached what, from the description, must have been the Grands Mulets rocks: and now the third night was to be passed. They made a fresh bivouac: the guides contrived several sheltered places in the nooks and corners of the rock; and De Saussure was more comfortable than he had felt when they were all crowded together under the tent on the plateau. He says, "We supped merrily together, and with famous appetites; after which I passed an excellent night upon my little mattress. It was not until then that I really felt pleased at having accomplished the wish of twenty-seven years—that is to say, dating from my first visit to Chamouni, in 1760—a project I had so often thrown over and taken up again, and which had been such a continual subject of mistrust and anxiety to my family. It had become a perfect disease with me: my eyes never fell on Mont Blanc, visible from so many points in our neighbourhood, without my ex-

periencing a really painful sensation. At the moment of my reaching the summit I was not really satisfied—I was less so when I left it. I only reflected then upon what I had *not* done. But in the stillness of the night, after having recovered from my fatigue, when I went over the observations I had made—when, especially, I retraced the magnificent expanse of the mountain peaks which I had carried away engraven on my mind—and when I thought I might accomplish on the Col du Géant what, most assuredly, I should never do on Mont Blanc, I enjoyed a true and unalloyed satisfaction.”

At six o'clock the next morning—that of the fourth day of the journey—they left the rocks, and crossing the Tacconnay Glacier, reached the hut on the Côte in an hour. They had some trouble, not un-mixed with danger, on the Glacier ; but at last, about half-past nine, they all stood together in safety on solid ground. In less than three hours, they reached Chamouni.

Their arrival was, as De Saussure says, “*tout à la fois gaie et touchante.*” They were met by all the relations and friends of the guides, and the various greetings were most affecting. Madame de Saussure, his sisters, and her children, had passed an anxious time at Chamouni ; but were now overcome with joy, as were, although in a less degree, a great many

friends, who had come purposely from Geneva, to welcome the good Professor back from his enterprise.

De Saussure remained the next day at Chamouni, and then returned to his home, "whence," he says, "he could now look upon Mont Blanc with true delight, without experiencing those sensations of anxiety and trouble which the sight of the mountain had hitherto given rise to."

CHAPTER VII.

DR. HAMEL'S FATAL ATTEMPT.

THE reader may remember I have spoken of M. Bourrit—De Saussure's indefatigable friend. He had made three unsuccessful attempts to scale the mountain already, and on the day De Saussure reached the summit, he started again. But the weather and the snow again combined against him. He only reached the top of the Côte, without touching the glacier, and was then driven back.

Next day Colonel Beaufoy (whom M. Bourrit calls *Mr. le Chevalier Beaufoix*) arrived at Chamouni, with the intention of making the ascent. He slept at the Côte, as De Saussure had done; but, starting very early the next morning, reached the summit by two o'clock p. m., to the surprise of all who were watching his progress with telescopes. This, however, was a forced march, brought about by the fear of a

change in the weather; and he suffered for it: for when he returned to Chamouni the next day, his face was completely peeled, and his eyes in a terrible state of inflammation. It was at one time feared that he would lose his sight; but he appears to have derived great benefit from an ointment in which the fat of the marmot was the chief ingredient. Mrs. Beaufoy, who was scarcely nineteen years of age, during his illness collected all the results of the experiments her husband had made on the summit, with a facility and correctness which, M. Bourrit assures us, "gave him a very high notion of English education."

The following autumn (1788), our indefatigable traveller, nothing discouraged by his repeated failures, tried again to get up the mountain, accompanied by his son. He assures us that all the preparations were made "regardless of expense." He engaged seventeen guides, and brought De Saussure's tent with him from Geneva. He collected a large quantity of wrappers and blankets, and straw for their bivouac, and provisions enough for six days, if required. All these necessities were augmented by the arrival of two more gentlemen, bent on the same errand—Mr. Woodley, an Englishman, and Mr. Camper, a native of Holland. They agreed to make one party, and five more guides were added to the caravan.

This venture nearly terminated fatally. They slept,

as usual, the first night, on the Côte, and attempted to reach the summit the next day, as Colonel Beaufoy had done. Mr. Woodley, who appears to have possessed the best legs and lungs of the party, walked clean away from them with four guides: some of the others knocked up on the Grand Plateau, and returned to the Grands Mulets dead beat. M. Bourrit really reached the *calotte*, as the last dome of Mont Blanc is called, and was frightened back from thence by the Dutchman, who, being some way ahead, returned with a terrible account of the cold and danger. A heavy fog soon shrouded everything, and they reached their tent with great difficulty, where, towards night, they were rejoined by Mr. Woodley and his guides—the former with his feet frost-bitten, and all the men more or less invalided. They passed a wretched night, and returned the following morning to Chamouni. Mr. Woodley was obliged to keep his feet in snow and salt for a fortnight; one of the Balmats was blind for three weeks; Cachat had his hands frozen, and was a long time recovering; and poor M. Bourrit, at last appeared inclined, after five disappointments, to give up the enterprise as a bad job. He never tried it again, but contented himself with crossing the Col de Balme, and describing the Simplon.

Fourteen years now passed before another successful

ascent was achieved. There were many attempts commenced, unmarked by any adventures, except one made in 1791, when one of the guides accompanying four Englishmen had his leg broken by an *éboulement* of rocks on the Côte, and another had his skull fractured. On the 10th of August, 1802, M. Forneret, of Lausanne, and Baron Doorthesen, a German, reached the summit, after encountering terrible difficulties, and suffering most acutely from the rarefaction of the air. M. Forneret told M. Bourrit that he could only compare the agony he endured to that of a man whose lungs were being violently torn from his chest. In 1809, Maria Parodis, the wife of one of the guides, ascended with Victor Tairraz, the father of the present hotel-keeper. In 1812, M. Rodatz, of Hamburg, gained the summit. In 1818, a Russian, Count Mateyski, succeeded ; and in 1819 there were two ascents made—one by two Americans, Dr. Russell and Mr. Howard, and the other by an English naval officer, Captain Underhill.

We now arrive at the date of the terrible accident which threw such a frightful interest round the ascents of Mont Blanc, and by which three of the guides lost their lives, when Dr. Hamel attempted the mountain in 1820. This gentleman, who is still alive, and frequently in London, was at this time employed by the Emperor of Russia to make some

important philosophical observations; and for the better carrying out of some of these, he had determined to ascend Mont Blanc in company with M. Selligie, an optician at Geneva, who was anxious also to try some experiments, principally with a new barometer of his own construction. They met, at Geneva, with two young Englishmen—Mr. Durnford, now a clergyman in the West of England, and Mr. Henderson—both, at that time, of Brazenose—and agreed to form one party together. They engaged twelve guides; the weather was everything that could be desired, and the most agreeable results were anticipated.

The first day's journey to the Grands Mulets was accomplished without any accident, with the exception of a mischance which occurred to Julien Devouassoud—one of the guides—who swallowed some sulphuric acid, in mistake for syrup of vinegar. This might have terminated seriously; but fortunately a châlet was at hand, from which Dr. Hamel procured some wood-ashes, and administering them to the sufferer, in water, succeeded in neutralizing the acid. At the Grands Mulets the guides made a sort of tent with their batons and blankets; and this was scarcely completed, when a violent thunderstorm came on, which lasted nearly all night long. Dr. Hamel put his electrometer outside the tent, to see the state of

the atmosphere; but it was so violently affected, that he was glad to draw it back again.

All next day they were detained on the Grands Mulets by bad weather, and had to send two guides back to Chamouni for fresh provisions. About two o'clock the next morning, however, the stars came out; and finally, day broke most beautifully. "The guides," says Mr. Durnford, "were now eager to proceed, and our whole party shared in their ardour, with one exception. M. Selligie had passed a rather sleepless night, during which, he had made it out completely to his own satisfaction, that a married man had a sacred and imperious call to prudence and caution where his own life seemed at all at stake: thus he had done enough for glory in passing two nights, in succession, perched on a crag, like an eagle, and that it now became him, like a sensible man, to return to Geneva, while return was yet possible. All our remonstrances proving ineffectual, though an allusion to his new barometer was not forgotten, we left him, with two of the guides, in possession of the tent, on the Grands Mulets. These men were persuaded, much against their inclination, to forego the pleasure of continuing the ascent, and thus adding to their reputation as guides. Two of them, who had never been on the summit, and who were, therefore, selected as most proper to remain, actually refused.

These were Pierre Balmat and Auguste Tairraz, whose names will appear again in the sequel."

At twenty minutes past eight, a.m., the party reached the Grand Plateau, where they made an attempt at breakfast ; but there was no great appetite amongst the party. At nine they resumed their march. "We were all," says Dr. Hamel, "full of hope and joy, at seeing ourselves so near the end of our laborious journey. The glorious weather which prevailed, the awful stillness which reigned around, and the pure, celestial air which we inhaled, gave birth in our souls to feelings which are never experienced in these lower regions." At half-past ten they had arrived nearly below the Rochers Rouges; and now we must let Mr. Durnford speak for himself:—

"About twenty minutes after the change in our direction above alluded to, the difficulty of breathing gradually increasing, and our thirst being incessant, I was obliged to stop half a minute to arrange my veil; and the sun being at that moment partially concealed by a cloud, I tucked it up under the large straw hat which I wore. In this interval, my companion H—— and three of the guides passed me, so that I was now sixth in the line, and of course the centre man. H—— was next before me; and as it was the first time we had been so circumstanced during the whole

morning, he remarked it, and said we ought to have one guide at least between us, in case of accident. This I over-ruled by referring him to the absence of all appearance of danger at that part of our march, to which he assented. I did not then attempt to recover my place in front, though the wish more than once crossed my mind, finding, perhaps, that my present one was much less laborious. To this apparently trivial circumstance I was indebted for my life. A few minutes after the above conversation, my veil being still up, and my eyes turned at intervals towards the summit of the mountain, which was on the right, as we were crossing obliquely the long slope above described, which was to conduct us to the Mont Maudit, the snow suddenly gave way beneath our feet, beginning at the head of the line, and carried us all down the slope to our left. I was thrown instantly off my feet, but was still on my knees and endeavouring to regain my footing, when, in a few seconds, the snow on our right, which was of course above us, rushed into the gap thus suddenly made, and completed the catastrophe by burying us all at once in its mass, and hurrying us downwards towards two crevasses about a furlong below us, and nearly parallel to the line of our march. The accumulation of snow instantly threw me backwards, and I was carried down, in spite of all my struggles. In less than

a minute I emerged, partly from my own exertions, and partly because the velocity of the falling mass had subsided from its own friction. I was obliged to resign my pole in the struggle, feeling it forced out of my hand. A short time afterwards, I found it on the very brink of the crevasse. This had hitherto escaped our notice, from its being so far below us, and it was not until some time after the snow had settled, that I perceived it. At the moment of my emerging, I was so far from being alive to the danger of our situation, that on seeing my two companions at some distance below me, up to the waist in snow, and sitting motionless and silent, a jest was rising to my lips, till a second glance showed me that, with the exception of Mathieu Balmat, they were the only remnants of the party visible. Two more, however, being those in the interval between myself and the rear of the party, having quickly reappeared, I was still inclined to treat the affair rather as a perplexing though ludicrous delay, in having sent us down so many hundred feet lower, than in the light of a serious accident, when Mathieu Balmat cried out that some of the party were lost, and pointed to the crevasse, which had hitherto escaped our notice, into which, he said, they had fallen. A nearer view convinced us all of the sad truth. The three front guides, Pierre Carrier, Pierre Balmat, and Auguste Tairraz,

being where the slope was somewhat steeper, had been carried down with greater rapidity, and to a greater distance, and had thus been hurried into the crevasse, with an immense mass of snow upon them, which rose nearly to the brink. Mathieu Balmat, who was fourth in the line, being a man of great muscular strength, as well as presence of mind, had suddenly thrust his pole into the firm snow beneath, when he felt himself going, which certainly checked, in some measure, the force of his fall. Our two hindermost guides were also missing, but we were soon gladdened by seeing them make their appearance, and cheered them with loud and repeated hurrahs. One of these, Julien Devouassoud, had been carried into the crevasse, where it was very narrow, and had been thrown with some violence against the opposite brink. He contrived to scramble out without assistance, at the expense of a trifling cut on the chin. The other, Joseph Marie Couttet, had been dragged out by his companions, quite senseless, and nearly black from the weight of snow which had been upon him. In a short time, however, he recovered. It was long before we could convince ourselves that the others were past hope, and we exhausted ourselves fruitlessly, for some time, in fathoming the loose snow with our poles. When the sad truth burst upon us, our feelings may, perhaps, be

conceived, but cannot be expressed. The first reflection made involuntarily by each of us: 'I have caused the death of those brave fellows,'—however, it was afterwards over-ruled in our calmer moments,—was then replete with unutterable distress. We were separated so far from one another by the accident, that we had some distance to come before we could unite our endeavours. The first few minutes, as may be readily imagined, were wasted in irregular and unsystematic attempts to recover them. At length, being thoroughly convinced, from the relative positions of the party when the accident happened, that the poor fellows were indeed in the crevasse, at the spot pointed out by Mathieu Balmat, the brother of one of them—in our opinion, only one thing remained to be done, and that was, to venture down upon the snow which had fallen in, and, as a forlorn hope, to fathom its unknown depths with our poles. After having thus made every effort in our power for their recovery, we agreed to abandon the enterprise altogether, and return to the Grands Mulets. The guides having in vain attempted to divert us from our purpose, we returned to the crevasse, from which, during the consultation, we had separated ourselves to a short distance, and descended upon the new-fallen snow. Happily it did not give way beneath our weight. Here we continued, above a quarter of an

hour, to make every exertion in our power for the recovery of our poor comrades. After thrusting the poles in to their full length, we knelt down, and applied our mouth to the end, shouting along them, and then listening for an answer, in the fond hope that they might still be alive, sheltered by some projection of the icy walls of the crevasse; but, alas! all was silent as the grave, and we had too much reason to fear that they were long since insensible, and probably at a vast depth beneath the snow on which we were standing. We could see no bottom to the gulf on each side of the pile of snow on which we stood; the sides of the crevasse were here, as in other places, solid ice, of a cerulean colour, and very beautiful to the eye. Two of the guides, our two leaders, had followed us mechanically to the spot, but could not be prevailed upon to make any attempts to search for the bodies. One of these soon proposed to us to continue the ascent. This was Marie Couttet, who had escaped so narrowly with his life; but Julien Devouassoud loudly protested against this, and resolutely refused to advance. Whether or not we could have prevailed on a sufficient number to accompany us to the summit, I cannot say; but we did not bring the point to trial, having now no room left in our minds for any other idea than that of the most bitter regret. I hardly know whether we should then have

felt sufficient interest to lead us a hundred yards onwards, had that been the only remaining interval between us and the summit. Had we recovered our lost companions, I am sure the past danger would not have deterred us; but to advance under present circumstances, required other hearts than ours. I believe those who condemn us for having abandoned the enterprise when so near to its accomplishment (and many have done so), refer all our reluctance to personal fear; but this is a charge from which we do not feel very anxious to clear ourselves. We had soon to encounter a much more serious imputation of an opposite character, that of undue rashness, in persisting in the ascent after the bad weather we had experienced. The best refutation of this charge may be seen in the *procès-verbal*, held the following morning by the municipal officer, on occasion of the unhappy catastrophe. I was anxious to procure a copy of this important document before we left the Prieuré; but this being against custom, we made a similar application to the magistrate at Bonneville, the head-quarters of the district. He was obliging enough to forward a copy to each of us, to our address at Geneva. Had this arrived earlier, we should have been spared some very painful scenes in that city; where, by the industry of M. Selligie, some very injurious reports were soon in circulation

against us. The reluctance expressed by the guides on our proposing to set off the preceding day, arose not so much from the danger they anticipated, as from a conviction that our object in the ascent would be defeated by the cloudiness of the weather. As the same wind continued, they anticipated rain, which would have incommoded us exceedingly ; but on the third morning all their objections seemed at once to vanish, and they were all so eager to proceed, that, as was observed above, we found some difficulty in selecting two to remain behind at the Grands Mulets.

“To return to our narrative. All our endeavours proving fruitless, we at length tore ourselves from the spot, towards which we continued to direct many a retrospective glance, in the vague hope of seeing our poor companions reappear, and commenced our melancholy descent. After a silent march of nearly three hours, which we performed, not, as before, in one unbroken line, but in detached parties, Dr. Hamel being at some distance behind and H—— in the front, we regained the Grands Mulets, where we found our tent just as we had left it in the morning. Here we met two guides, who were arrived from Chamonix, accompanied by two Frenchmen on a geological tour : they were desirous of joining our party, but on hearing the accident which had befallen us,

preferred returning with us to Chamounix. As I was narrating the catastrophe to the party on the rock, one of them, in the warmth of his heart, caught me in his arms, and I was obliged to submit to a salute on both sides of the face, by way of congratulation. Though the day was now pretty far advanced, it being past three o'clock, yet we preferred continuing our descent. After a short halt, during which the guides packed up all the baggage, we once more put ourselves in motion, and addressed ourselves to the formidable task of descending the Grands Mulets. The guides promised us daylight sufficient to conduct us over all the *mauvais pas*, after which we might either take up with a shed and some straw at the châlet, or proceed to the hôtel at Chamounix, according as our strength and inclination should direct. Our mental excitement set us above all personal fear, and we apprehended lest this should be quickly succeeded by a nervousness, which might altogether incapacitate us for exertion. The commencement of the descent over the ridge being achieved with great caution, we soon proceeded pretty rapidly. One of the guides took the lead, as usual. He was followed by one of ourselves, with a cord round his waist, which was held by the guide next in the line. By this arrangement, we were each between two guides, and the spikes in our heels gave us additional confidence in treading. M. Selligie

had set off on his return as soon as we were out of sight in the morning. The two guides who had arrived with our new acquaintances the Frenchmen, had met him with his two guides in the passage of the glacier, which both these parties contrived to cross without the aid of the ladder, which remained all the time as the main rafter of our tent above. Nothing remarkable occurred during our rapid descent to the chalet, excepting that we found a young chamois in the glacier, which appeared to have made a fruitless endeavour to cross it, and lost its life by a fall. Our thirst continued as violent as ever, and we drank every five minutes at the delicious drippings of the glacier. Ever since breakfast we had been in a high state of fever, which our mental agitation had no doubt much increased. Dr. Hamel's pulse was at 128 in the minute, and H——'s and mine were probably at nearly the same height.

“We reached the chalet about seven, where we refreshed ourselves with some milk and wild strawberries. Our new companions, having ascended from this spot in the morning, were now quite exhausted, and remained here for the night. We preferred continuing the descent, though in the dark, by a track which reminded me strongly of a night march in the Pyrenees, and about nine o'clock arrived at the hotel. Mathieu Balmat had got the start of us about ten

minutes, and we found a large party of women loudly bewailing the fate of the unhappy sufferers. We shut ourselves up immediately, not being in a situation to bear company. We found at the hotel some Oxford friends, who arrived on the evening of the day of our ascent, in the midst of the thunder-storm, and were much alarmed at seeing our names in the travellers' book. During the day before they had observed us on the Grands Mulets, and that very morning had seen us on our way to the Grand Plateau. They ascertained our number to be eleven, and a few hours afterwards saw us return with only eight in the party. They even took notice that the two or three last were perpetually stopping and looking behind them. From these signs, the landlord of the hotel anticipated the melancholy tidings first brought by poor Balmat.

“The next morning we sent for the relatives of the deceased. Fortunately neither of them was married, but Carrier had left an aged father, who had been wholly dependent on him for support. We left with him what we could spare; and at Geneva a subscription was soon opened for them, under the auspices of the amiable Professor Pictet, who generously exerted himself in their behalf. Our meeting with old Balmat was the most affecting of all. He had been one of Saussure's guides, and was brother to the hero surnamed Mont Blanc. On my commending the bravery of his

poor son Pierre, the tears started into his eyes, which kindled for a moment at the compliment, and he grasped my hand with ardour as he replied, 'Oui, Monsieur, vous avez raison, il étoit même trop brave, comme son père.' The officer soon attended to conduct the procès-verbal. He was the brother of our host, and noways inclined to abate anything of the respect due to his office. He dictated from his seat, while his amanuensis wrote. He was a great stickler for grammatical accuracy, and there was a long discussion about the respective claims of an indicative and subjunctive mood, during which he laid down the law with the most ludicrous gravity and self-importance. Dr. Hamel and three of the guides were examined upon oath as to the cause of the misfortune. They all agreed in referring it solely to accident. About two o'clock we set off on our return for Chamounix in two sharabands, and we were glad to recognise in one of the drivers our late captain, Joseph Marie Couttet, who had thrown off his chasseur's pelisse, and now appeared in the costume of postilion. Our parting with the inhabitants of the village was truly affecting. The sympathy which we could not help displaying in the grief of the surviving relatives had won all their honest hearts, and many pressed round our sharabands for the pleasure of wishing us a safe and happy return to England. We slept, as before,

at St. Martin, and the following day arrived at Geneva.

“I will add a few words in explanation of the immediate cause of the accident. We were taken so completely unawares, and so speedily buried in the snow, that it is no great wonder that our accounts do not in all points agree. Dr. Hamel, according to his own account, besides the impediment of his veil and spectacles, was wholly engrossed in counting his own steps. He was last in the line, and at some distance from the rest; and the suddenness of the accident made him suppose it produced by an avalanche from the summit of the mountain. H—— had the same idea, and accordingly made some abortive attempts to get out of the way, by following the descent of the slope. This probably, united with his subsequent self-abandonment to the force of the snow, caused his being carried down so much nearer the crevasse than myself, who, from the very short distance between us, should have emerged about the same spot. The following, I believe, is the most correct statement of the process of the misfortune. During two or three days a pretty strong southerly wind had prevailed, which, drifting gradually a mass of snow from the summit, had caused it to form a sort of wreath on the northern side, where the angle of its inclination to the horizon was small enough to allow it to settle. In the course

of the preceding night, that had frozen, but not so hard as to bear our weight. Accordingly, in crossing the slope obliquely, as above described, with the summit on our right, we broke through the outer crust, and sank in nearly up to the knees. At the moment of the accident a crack had been formed quite across the wreath; this caused the lower part to slide down under our weight on the smooth slope of snow beneath it, and the upper part of the wreath, thus bereft of its support, followed it in a few seconds, and was the grand contributor to the calamity. The angle of the slope, a few minutes before the accident, was only 28° . Here, perhaps, it was somewhat greater, and in the extreme front probably greatest of all, since the snow fell there with greater velocity, and to a greater distance. Should any one be induced to make another attempt to reach the summit by the same route, he should either cross the slope below the crevasse, and then, having passed it by a ladder, mount in zig-zag towards the Mont Maudit; or the party should proceed in parallel lines, and not trust all their weight to a surface, which, whenever a southerly wind prevails, must be exposed to a similar danger. All such plans as that of fastening themselves together with a rope would be utterly useless, besides the insupportable fatigue which this method of proceeding would occasion, as will at once be acknowledged

by all who have made the experiment. This plan answers well enough in the descent, and when two or three only are united by the rope ; but in other circumstances it would utterly fail. At the moment of the accident, Pierre Carrier—on every circumstance connected with whom I still feel a melancholy pleasure in dwelling—was at the head of the line, and Pierre Balmat, who, as well as his immediate follower and partner in the misfortune, Auguste Tairraz, was making his first ascent, was second. Couttet had been on the summit five or six times, and was then, as well as his brother David, in the rear of the party. The behaviour of all the guides on occasion of the accident was such, perhaps, as might be expected from men thrown on a sudden completely out of their reckoning :—their presence of mind, for some minutes, seemed utterly to abandon them, and they walked to and fro, uttering cries of despair. The conduct of poor Mathieu Balmat was most heart-rending to witness :—after some frantic gestures of despair, he threw himself on the snow, where he sat for a time in sullen silence, rejecting all our kind offices with a sort of irritation which made it painful to approach him. But this did not last long ; he suffered me to lead him a few paces at the commencement of the descent, and then suddenly shaking himself, as if from a load, he adjusted the straps of his knapsack, and resumed

his wonted firmness. At times he even chimed in with the conversation of the rest with apparent unconcern ; but I observed a sort of convulsion occasionally pass across him, from which he relieved himself by the same gesture of shaking his head and throwing it backwards. It is remarkable, that, from the commencement of the descent until our arrival at the Grand Mulet, he attached himself to my friend H——, and adjusted his steps with the same assiduity as if he had been unengrossed by personal suffering.

“ Joseph Marie Couttet, who from his former military habits had acquired probably a familiarity with death, betrayed, as we thought, something approaching to insensibility on the occasion.* He was, as has been observed, very near sharing the fate of the poor sufferers, and perhaps this very circumstance made him jealous of displaying too much feeling on the occasion. Yet, on his taking leave of me the following day, he exhibited so much warmth of regret, that I was affected almost to tears. His brother, David Couttet, another of the guides, was equally intrepid,

* He had formerly served in the *Chasseurs à cheval* in the French service, an honour which he duly appreciated. I cannot omit his laconic answer to a question proposed to him by one of the party, on the state of his mind during his rapid descent under the snow :—
“ *Ma foi, j'ai dit à moi-même, c'est fini—je suis perdu—voilà tout.* ”

and I believe was the means of preserving my life during the descent, in the passage of the glacier. My feet had slipped from under me, and I had rolled to the edge of a crevasse, when I felt myself suddenly arrested on its very brink by the cord around my waist, which allowed me time to recover myself.

“The minute details respecting the guides, with which I have interspersed this narrative, will not, I feel persuaded, be deemed impertinent by those who have ever been acquainted with this highly interesting race of men. There is about them all an honest frankness of character, united with a simple though courteous behaviour, and an almost tender solicitude about the safety and comfort of those committed to their guidance, which cannot fail to make a lasting impression on those who have once known them. The delight which they testify at finding the traveller surmount difficulties, and the looks of congratulation and encouragement which they every now and then direct towards him, contribute highly to keep up his spirit, which else might perhaps desert him at some important crisis. The principal of them are well known and appreciated at Geneva; and the reader will not therefore feel much wonder at the strong feeling which prevailed against us on our return thither. Our former companion had found it necessary to his own credit, to exaggerate exceedingly the apparent

danger of proceeding higher ; and it must be allowed that his account, supported as it was by the subsequent disaster, possessed strong claims upon the faith of his audience. I am happy, however, to add, that in a very few days this erroneous impression was completely done away with, and ample justice was rendered by all to the conduct of Dr. Hamel, who had been the most obnoxious to their censure, both from his being considered the leader of the party, and from his well-known ardour in similar undertakings."

CHAPTER VIII.

SUCCESSIVE ASCENTS OF MONT BLANC—CHAMOUNI—
A DAY ON THE GLACIERS.

AFTER Doctor Hamel's accident, the snows on Mont Blanc remained untrodden for two years; and then, on the 18th of August, 1822, Mr. Frederick Clissold reached the top. After this, a great many attempts were made; and the list of the successes, preserved at Chamouni, comprises the following names, in order:—

Frederick Clissold (English)	Aug. 18, 1822.
Mr. Jackson (English)	Sept. 4, 1823.

Mr. Jackson was the first adventurer who, having reached the summit, descended the same day to Chamouni. He accomplished the entire journey under thirty-seven hours.

Dr. Edmund Clark and Captain Mark-	} Aug. 26, 1825.
ham Sherwill (English)	
Ch. Fellows and T. M. Hawes (English)	July 25, 1827.

Messrs. Fellows (now Sir Charles Fellows) and Hawes struck out a new route above the plateau, which, although it encountered the formidable *Mur de la Cote*, avoided all the avalanche dangers of the old line. This is the one that has been ever since followed.

John Auldjo (Scotch)	Aug. 9, 1827.
Captain G. B. Wilbraham (English)	Aug. 3, 1830.
Dr. Martin Barry (English)	Sept. 17, 1834.
Count Henry de Tilly (French)	Oct. 9, 1843.
Alfred Waddington (English)	July 10, 1836.
Gabriel Hedrengen (Swede), Sam. Pidwell } and Martin Atkins (English) }	Aug. 23, 1837.
M. Doulcet (French)	Aug. 26, 1837.
Ferdinand Eisenkraemer, of the Royal Hotel, Chamounix (German), Mlle. Henriette d'Angeville (French), M. C. Stoppen (Pole)	Sept. 4, 1838.

Mlle. d'Angeville was the second female who reached the top. Her courage is reported to have been very great. She refused all assistance from Mr. Stoppen's party, and when on the summit, made the guides lift her up on their shoulders, that she might say she had been actually higher than anybody else.

Marquis Imperial de Belange (Neapolitan)	Aug. 27, 1840.
Dr. Chenal, of Sallanches	Aug. 26, 1841.
Edouard Ordinaire (French) and Edouard } Tairraz, of Chamouni }	Aug. 26, 1843.
M. Nicholson (English), Edouard Ordi- naire (French), and the Abbé Caux } (Savoyard) }	Aug. 31, 1843.
W. Bosworth, Edw. Cross (English), M. Blanc, of Bonneville	Sept. 4, 1843.

This ascent derived considerable interest from the circumstance of Sir Thomas Talfourd, and his son, Mr. Francis Talfourd, having, at first, formed two of the party. The charming description of the mountain in the "Vacation Rambles" is well and widely known. The cause of their return is thus graphically described. After a marvellous picture of the sunset on the Grands Mulets, the amiable writer goes on to say :—

"When this pageantry of a lower heaven had passed away, I fell asleep, and slept without a dream. I only awoke once, and finding my next companion awake, inquired if he knew the hour, hoping that the period for starting had arrived. He informed me, being able to interpret the language of his watch, that it was only ten o'clock ; but, after a minute or two's shiver, I fell asleep again, and slept till the guides roused me at ten minutes before twelve from deep and sweet slumber. There was no moonlight—the only elemental felicity wanting to our enterprise—but the stars and the snow relieved the darkness, which was also broken by numerous lanterns, which were already lighted, and shone among the bristling cornices of the rock below me like huge dull glow-worms. After the first sensation of cold and stiffness had subsided, and the mistiness that hangs over the perception of a suddenly-awakened sleeper in a strange place had dis-

persed, I took my pole, and picked my way down the rock, my steps being lighted by Julien's lantern, and soon found myself in the midst of the long procession of travellers and guides, slowly pacing the plain of snow which lies between the rock and the first upward slope. When we began to ascend, the snow was found so hard and so steep, that we were obliged to pause every ten paces, while the guides with hatchets cut steps. Every one, I believe, performs some part well ; at least, few are without some grace or power, which they are found to possess in a peculiar degree, if the proper occasion occurs to rouse it into action ; and I performed the stopping part admirably. While we stood still I felt as if able to go on ; and it is possible that if the progress had always been as difficult, and consequently as slow and as replete with stoppages, I might eventually have reached the summit—unless first frozen. But, unluckily for me, these occasions of halting soon ceased ; for the snow became so loose, as to present no obstacle excepting the necessity of sinking to the knees at every step. The line of march lay up long slopes of snow ; nothing could ever be discerned but a waste of snow ascending in a steep inclination before us ; no crevice gave us pause ; there was nothing to vary the toil or the pain, except that as fatigue crept on, and nature began to discriminate between the stronger and the weaker, our

line was no longer continuous, but broken into parties, which, of course, rendered the position of the hindermost more dispiriting. The rarity of the atmosphere now began to affect us ; and as the disorder resulting from this cause was more impartial than the distribution of muscular activity, our condition was, for a short time, almost equalized ; even Mr. Bosworth felt violent nausea and headache ; while I only felt, in addition to the distress of increasing weakness, the taste or scent of blood in the mouth, as it were about to burst from the nostrils. We thus reached the Grand Plateau—a long field of snow in the bosom of the highest pinnacles of the mountain—which, being nearly level, was much less distressing to traverse than the previous slopes ; but just before the commencement of the next ascent, which rose in a vast dim curve, the immediate occasion of my failure occurred. Mr. Bosworth, who was in advance, turned back to inform me that my son was so much affected by the elevation, that his guides thought it necessary that he should return. We halted till we were joined by him and his guides, on two of whom he was leaning, and who explained that he was sick and faint, and wished to lie down for a few minutes, to which they would not consent, as, if he should fall asleep on the snow, he might never awake. The youth himself was anxious to proceed—quite satisfied,

if he might only rest for a very little time, he could go on—but they shook their heads; and as their interests and wishes were strongly engaged for our success, I felt it was impossible to trifle with such a decision. I could not allow him to return without me; and, therefore, determined at once to abandon the further prosecution of the adventure; a determination which I should not else have formed *at that moment*, but which I believe I must have adopted soon from mere prostration of strength; and which, therefore, I do not lay in the least to the charge of his indisposition. He was still light of limb, and courageous in heart; only afflicted by the treachery of the stomach, and dizziness produced by the rarity of the air; whereas, if I had been supported and dragged (as perhaps I might have been) to the foot of the steep of La Côte, which is the last difficulty of the ascent, I do not believe I should have had muscular pliancy left to raise a foot up a step of the long staircase, which the guides are obliged to cut in its frozen snow. While the guides were re-arranging matters for the descent, I took one longing, lingering glance at the upward scenery, and perceived sublime indications of those heights I was never to climb. The other parties were ascending the enormous curve beyond our platform, their line exhibited only by the lanterns, which seemed self-moving along the snow

amidst darkness, but marking luminously a portion of the glorious dome—regular, it seemed, as that of St. Paul's Cathedral—and more beautiful, because, springing at once into a globular form, and of a size compared to which all cupolas fashioned by hands are as those of a baby-house—recalling to my mind the sphere throne of the spirit in the hall of Eblis.

“ Silent and sad, our discomfited bands addressed themselves to the inglorious work of descending ; and each of us being supported by a rope which was held by a guide, moved downwards (alas !) with accelerated steps. Morning soon broke cold and grey over us and became broad day before we regained our former lodging on the Grands Mulets. Here we found clothing and provisions which we had left, without any apprehension of theft ; and, with the aid of the guides, who wrapped the coverings about us with great adroitness, renewed our couch, and tried in vain to sleep. We had scarcely endeavoured to compose ourselves before we saw another detachment—that of one of the young gentlemen who had joined us from the Hôtel de Londres—following our downward track, and soon welcomed him as a companion in misfortune. And presently a black lonely speck was discovered, slowly moving on the snow, downward, yet far out of our track ; who or what it could be was matter of puzzling guesses, almost of fear ; but it

turned out to be an enthusiastic old man, who, many years ago, had been one of the Chamouni guides, but had been living since some other life at Geneva, and being disturbed by reports of the favourable condition of his once-loved mountain, and of the ascents which had succeeded, travelled to the Prieuré to join or follow some party, and had modestly followed ours alone at a distance, in the hope of once more realizing the summit of his young ambition and success. He found that he had overtasked his strength, and soon reached us, piteously exhausted, to obtain some relief in the consolations of his old comrades, and in a participation in such fragmental provisions as were left from the evening's banquet."

Dr. Martin, Dr. Lepileur, and M. Bravais (French)	} Aug. 29, 1844.
Count Fernand de Bouillé (French)	. . . July 14, 1846.
John Wooley and J. J. Hurt (English)	. . . Aug. 5, 1846.
Archibald Vincent Smith (English)	. . . Aug. 11, 1847.
P. A. Richards	. . . Aug. 29, 1850.
J. D. Gardner	. . . Sept. 3, 1850.
Erasmus Galton	. . . Sept. 6, 1850.
W. E. Sackville West, C. G. Floyd, F. Philips, Albert Smith, N. Vansittart.	} Aug. 13, 1851.

Mr. Vansittart, who followed us up, did an uncommonly "plucky" thing. He started from Chamouni with one guide only ; they carried all they had between them—slept, I can't think where, for they never came to the Grands Mulets—and reached the

top as soon as we did. Mr. Vansittart had a very narrow escape from falling down a crevice on the Glacier des Bossons on his return home.

Julius Behrens (of Manchester) . . . Sept. 1851.

This ascent had an unfortunate termination. One of the guides, Payot, had his feet frost-bitten ; and the fore-parts of them were amputated on his return to Chamouni. He now keeps a little *châlet* for the sale of refreshments on the path to Montanvert, about twenty minutes from the valley level.

J. D. H. Brown,* and — Goodall (English) July, 1852.

Seven attempts were made this season to reach the summit, and of these aspirants the above gentlemen were the only successful ones. Amongst those who failed were Mr. Lake Russell and son, Mr. Somes, Mr. Grosvenor, Mr. Kennard, Mr. Bulwer, Mr. Usher, Mr. Sergeant, and Mr. John Owens, an American comedian. The weather was continuously worse than had been known for some years.

I have stated that, whenever I could get a short holiday in the autumn, I always went to Chamouni. Great changes took place, year after year, on the road. The old diligences disappeared as the Paris and Dijon line gradually extended to Chalons, and Geneva was brought within forty-six hours of

* This gentleman has lately published an admirable set of sketches of the ascent.



London. New roads were made between Geneva and Sallanches; new bridges built, and new hotels opened; and lastly, a gambling-house was established in the very heart of the "Prieuré!" This, however, had a brief existence; it was suppressed the day our party went up the mountain.

But although these improvements took place, they produced little change in the great features of Chamouni. The same old peaks and *aiguilles* rose precisely as they did when they looked down upon De Saussure and Pococke and Windham. The same streams tumbled down the hills; the dirty Arve kept up the same

ceaseless brawl over the huge boulders on its bed; and the same huge blocks of granite still rode slowly on the glaciers.

There are six of these glaciers which descend into the valley of Chamouni from the heights of the mountains, which form its boundaries; and they are named from the villages near which they terminate—viz., Tacconay, Gris, Bossons, Bois, Tour, and Argentière. The glacier Du Bois is by far the most considerable of these, and its upper part forms the celebrated Mer de Glace, which is so called from its alleged resemblance to a sea suddenly frozen and spell-bound in the midst of a raging tempest; the analogy is, however, not perfect; it might be more properly compared in shape to a vast ploughed field, whose ridges varied from ten to twenty feet in height, intersected by deep transverse fissures, in some places four hundred feet deep, such being the ascertained thickness of the ice in particular parts of this mighty glacier.

The traveller who visits the valley of Chamouni can undertake various highly interesting expeditions to the celebrated spots in the vicinity of the village; but the most interesting excursion is to the “Jardin,” a small, verdant patch in the centre of the Glacier du Taléfre, amidst the perpetual snow, and 8500 feet above the level of the sea. The journey should not be

undertaken but by persons of a steady brain and firm grasp, since there are some situations during the route where giddiness or nervous timidity might prove unpleasant.

I had several times traversed the valley of Chamouni before I was tempted to visit this extraordinary spot. A gentleman whom I met by chance at the Hôtel de Londres, in the village, had given me so pleasing an account of the excursion, which he represented as teeming with wonder and excitement, that I determined the same night to endeavour to accomplish it, and by good fortune found two other tourists who were willing to accompany me. We started from the dinner-table that same evening to hire our guides, learning that two were necessary, and were fortunate in securing Julien Devouassoud for one, who accompanied the party in the fatal attempt of 1820, and who also formed one of Mr. Auldjo's party in 1827.

The excursion occupies fifteen hours, ten of which are spent on the glacier. As we were anxious to accomplish it in one day, we had agreed to meet our guides not later than five the ensuing morning ; and as the hour sounded from the church of Chamouni we left the village, intending to breakfast at Montanvert, an elevated pasturage, which overlooks the Mer de Glace. The ascent to this point occupies about

two hours. The path in some places is little more than a series of steep, awkward stairs, formed of smooth rock, over which, nevertheless, the mules, who carry ladies to Montanvert, contrive to clamber without accident. The track lies nearly the whole way through a forest of pines, which permit occasional glimpses of the valley below; and here and there the path traverses a fissure crowded with trunks of trees and the *débris* of the mountain, marking the devastation committed at a former period by a spring avalanche. About half way up, the traveller arrives at a clear spring of water bubbling from the rock, round which a few children are generally clustered, who offer milk and fruit, with specimens of local minerals, for sale. The fountain, which commands a lovely view of Chamouni, many hundred feet below, is celebrated as the spot where Florian composed the greater part of his story of *Claudine*. But this the tourist can believe, or not, as he chooses. In about half an hour's walk from this point you first perceive the ice of the glacier sparkling amongst the trees that border it, and every now and then a large block, sliding from its resting-place, produces a noise resembling thunder. The journey to Montanvert alone is interesting to visitors; and although the road is not quite so smooth as the paths about our own English hills, yet it is but moderately fatiguing, and may be accomplished with no

other guides than your own eyes and a plain Alpine mountain pole.

We arrived at the first halting-place a little after seven, and immediately ordered breakfast in the *châlet* which is built upon Montanvert, and overlooks the Mer de Glace, and the stupendous Aiguilles on the other side.

We despatched our meal in high spirits, and having waited for the guides to store their knapsacks with cold meat, wine, and small loaves, for our dinner on the glacier, we left the *châlet* at a quarter to eight, Devouassoud leading the way, and the other guide following us. For two or three hundred yards the path skirted the glacier, and was tolerably pleasant walking, abounding in wild flowers, and covered by a delicate heath. It then ascended the side of the mountain, running about one hundred feet above the glacier, and presently appeared to stop short at an enormous rock of smooth granite, called *Le Pont*, and forming one of the most awkward passes in the excursion. I was contemplating the possibility of proceeding any further, when Devouassoud, coolly exclaiming, "*Suivez moi, messieurs, s'il vous plait,*" laid hold of a projecting ledge, and springing like a chamois, set his foot in a small excavation barely three inches deep, from whence he crawled on to the face of the rock which overhung the glacier. It was a minute

or two before I could collect sufficient nerve to follow him, nor were my fellow travellers less timid. We however, contrived literally to tread in his footsteps; and leaning towards the inclining face of the rock, with our iron-shod poles in our left hand, we crept cautiously onwards, never daring to look down upon the glacier, which was at an awful depth below us. I can compare the passage to nothing better than clinging sideways along the tiles of a steeply-pitched house, with no other footing or hold than occasional inequalities or ridges, and the certain prospect of being instantaneously dashed to pieces should these fail you. There are two of these awkward ridges to traverse—*Le Grand* and *Le Petit Pont*, both of which are equally hazardous, and I should think, in wet weather, almost impracticable. On quitting these rocks, which we did with no small gratification, we continued descending for some distance, and in about twenty minutes reached the edge of the glacier, or *moraine*, as it is termed—a confused mass of blocks of granite, ice and wet grit, which is extremely troublesome, and, indeed, painful to traverse, from the insecure footing that it affords. There is no absolute danger; but you stand a chance of dislocating your ankles at every step, and the edges of the granite rocks are so sharp, as to wound your hands in the event of your slipping. Devouassoud, as usual, went first, and where he saw

a treacherous block, kicked it out of the way, and it went thundering down the edge of the *moraine*, generally trailing half a dozen others in its course. We passed a crevice in the wall of lofty *Aiguilles* which rose on our right, called *La Grande Cheminée*, to which a melancholy interest is attached. A young Englishman, about twenty years ago, was at Chamouni with his wife, during their wedding tour. He was extremely fond of botany, and with a view of forming a dried collection of Alpine plants, had made an excursion from Montanvert to the base of the *Aiguille de Charmoz*, the lofty peak which rose over the point we were now traversing. He had been imprudent enough to venture to these wild heights without a guide; and in the endeavour, it is presumed, to secure a fine specimen of the *gentiana*, lost his balance, and fell down to the *moraine* of the glacier, a height of two hundred and fifty feet. His body was not discovered until two days afterwards, when it was found by a party proceeding to the Jardin, still grasping the plant in his hand. It was a task of extreme difficulty to convey the body across Les Ponts, but the guides ultimately brought it to Chamouni, and the ill-fated young man was, I believe, subsequently buried at Lausanne.

After an hour's severe labour, in which we several times left our shoes behind us in the clefts of the

granite, we emerged from the *moraine* upon the glacier. It is here that the sagacity and hardihood of the guides is displayed. They appear to have a miraculous instinct in choosing a practicable *route* amongst its clefts, and leap over the chasms that yawn on every side with a boldness and certainty that is really wonderful.

We passed several enormous rocks which had been split from the parent mountains by the force of storms or avalanches, and were now riding on the surface of the glacier. Devouassoud told us that, in time, from the constant advance of the glacier, these blocks would come down to Chamouni; but this, of course, would be the journey of centuries. He added, that in his own recollection they had moved several yards. We were shown, near one of them, a fearful hole in the ice, which the guides termed *Le Moulin*. Its depth was unknown—it had been plumbed to three hundred feet; and a torrent was roaring and chafing within it with a noise that was perfectly terrific.

To those who feel any interest in the nature of a glacier, there is a curious phenomenon to be seen during the excursion to the Jardin, near the *moulin* I have just noticed. At this spot three large glaciers unite:—the Glacier du Lechaud, from the Jorasses; the Glacier du Talêfre, from the heights around it;

and the Glacier du Tacul, direct from Mont Blanc. These three leviathans of the Alps, each pressing onwards, keep up a continued warfare with each other for superiority, in which the Tacul has the advantage, from its magnitude and line of descent; and a scene of inconceivable confusion is the result—their opposing power splitting and tossing about huge cubes of granite, of twenty or thirty feet square, like so many nutshells. Beyond this point, the surface of the Glacier du Tacul is perfectly level; and, to adopt Devouassoud's expression, "a diligence might be driven along it, if it could only be got there."

We crossed the *moraines* of these large fields of ice, and immediately commenced ascending the Couvercle—a steep and lofty rock shooting up directly from the glacier. If the passage of the Ponts had been the most hazardous part of our journey, probably this was the most fatiguing. The sun was shining with oppressive force directly upon us, and we were obliged to rest every ten or twelve steps to draw our breath; the altitude we had attained tending, no doubt, although but in a slight degree, to add to our exhaustion, for we were now more than eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, and the ascent so precipitous, that in climbing up the steep sides, our feet were generally in close approximation to the heads of those immediately behind us.

The Glacier du Talêfre, in all the beauty of its white pyramids, and sparkling, unsullied waves, now broke upon us ; and quitting the sure ground of the Couvercle, we followed Devouassoud as he advanced upon its treacherous surface. The heat of the day had thawed its upper layer, and we sank knee deep, at every step, in a *todge* of half-melted snow and ice. The guides were most urgent in begging us to tread as nearly as possible in their footmarks, as some of the tracks which appeared smooth and easy of passage, were merely bridges of snow thrown over chasms of immeasurable depth, which the slightest weight would cause to fall. Wherever there existed a doubt as to the practicability of crossing from one wave of the glacier to another, Devouassoud sounded the snow carefully with his ice-pole, nor would he allow us to move until he had ascertained its firmness ; and yet I was informed by Mr. Auldjo, that this brave guide, who knows not what danger means amidst the peaks and crevices of his own glaciers, was so frightened by a slight ruffle of the water on crossing the lake of Geneva, that he laid himself down at the bottom of the boat, and cried like a child.

About half-past twelve, we landed, if I may use the term, on the edge of the verdant ledge that forms the Jardin, heartily glad to arrive at the termination

of our journey. We ascended its green slope for about fifty yards, and then threw ourselves down upon the ground, completely "dead beat," whilst the guides disencumbered themselves of their knapsacks, which contained our provisions. We had now leisure to regard the scene around us, and it was of an imposing and extraordinary nature. Immediately in front, the long, unbroken surface of the Glacier du Tacul ran directly to the summit of Mont Blanc, whose apex was invested with a light, fleecy cloud, which was perpetually drifting to leeward, and somewhat resembled the smoke from a chimney. "Mont Blanc is smoking his cigar," said Devouassoud; "so much the better—we shall have a fine evening." Many hundred feet below us were the glistening waves of the Mer de Glace, bounded to our right by the Aiguille des Charmoz, and on the left by the Grandes Jorasse; at the foot of which range an English lady and her daughter once slept, amidst the eternal snow, during their extraordinary passage of the Col du Géant. The Jardin itself was a small grassy hillock, at the side of a natural basin of vast dimensions formed of granite rocks, the only outlet to which was by the precipitous fall of the Glacier du Talêfre. Blocks of gneiss and granite, the *débris* of the winter tempests, were scattered about it, with several small pieces of crystal, and some Alpine plants were blooming in the more

sheltered crevices ; but beyond its limits all was desolation and silence. Even a bee attracted our attention, as it flew humming by the spot we had selected for our repast ; we felt that, had we been alone, the very presence of an insect would have enlivened our solitude. Devouassoud informed me that the Jardin was a favourite resort of the Chamouni chamois-hunters, in consequence of its being the nearest pasturage for these animals during the autumnal months.

We did full justice to the frugal meal which the guides had provided for us ; and although it was confined to a piece of plain cold boiled mutton, with bread and salt, I thought I had never tasted anything so delicious. We had also three bottles of light claret, which we drank from portable leather cups, and we gave toasts and sang songs until the rocks echoed again with our merriment. We saw several corks and broken bottles lying about, which gave traces of former revellers having been to the Jardin ; indeed, we were told that, now and then, young ladies were found bold enough to make the attempt. How on earth they contrive to traverse the Ponts, or climb the Couvercle, I cannot very well make out ; yet, although the expedition is certainly one not particularly calculated for females to undertake, we were rather pleased than annoyed at hear-

ing that the majority of the fair adventurers were English girls.

About two o'clock p.m., we once more prepared to start, being perfectly refreshed by our repast. We had scarcely left the rock, when an accident occurred, which might have thrown a sad gloom over our day's enterprise. One of my companions, who appeared a little excited by the wine and novelty of our situation combined, instead of keeping in the wake of the guides, as we descended the rapid pitch of the Glacier du Talêfre, amused himself by sliding down the small slopes, in spite of our remonstrances, guiding himself with his baton. By some accident, the pole hitched in the ice as he was holding it before him, and the top of it catching him under the chin, threw him violently upon his back, at the same time grazing his neck severely. He must have fallen with some force, as the pole snapped in two with the shock. Losing his equilibrium immediately, he glided rapidly down the wave of ice, and the next instant was completely hidden from us in a large drift of snow. We were exceedingly alarmed, and called out loudly to know if he was safe; no answer was returned, and we stood in horrible suspense, until we saw him, a minute afterwards, emerge from the side of the drift furthest from us, and wave his cap, which signal we returned with cheers. We directly gave Devouassoud our

poles, who tied them together with our handkerchiefs, and by this means assisted our companion up the opposite side of the trough, if it may be called so. He was more frightened than hurt, except the graze under his chin, and did not seem inclined to venture any more out of the track. The guides said, that it was just as probable as not for the slope to have ended in a crevice, when nothing could have saved him, had it been sufficiently large for him to have fallen into; and upon the Mer de Glace they usually average from two to ten feet in breadth.

I had expected that we should descend to Montanvert in much less time than we had performed the upward journey, but I found my calculations totally wrong, as the afternoon sun had thawed the whole surface of the glacier, and we were obliged to walk with great caution, occasionally losing our shoes for a moment in the soft snow. We found some small piles of stones and pieces of ice, which the guides had built up as we came along, of great utility in pointing our track in returning, since nothing is more easy than to lose the path amidst the intricacies and crevices of the glacier. We heard several avalanches fall as we descended, but they were too remote to cause any apprehension, although their echoing *chute* had something awful in it, in these remote solitudes. As we advanced lower down the Mer de Glace, we could



discern the chalet on the Flegère, which forms the northern boundary of the valley of Chamouni, opposite the glacier; and in another half hour we were within view of Montanvert, where we had taken breakfast in the morning. We were now enabled to make better progress, as the ice was firmer, being shaded by the mountains that encompassed it, and our footing was surer, from the day's practice; indeed, we almost ran along ledges of ice, that we had with timidity crept across in the morning. The passage

of the Ponts was, however, quite as difficult as we had before found it, possibly from our being compelled to grasp every projection with our left hand.

At half-past five we reached the hut at Montanvert, and in two hours more descended to Chamouni, having been on our legs since five in the morning, with the exception of the intervals of breakfast and dinner. We gave the guides ten francs each, and the expenses of our breakfasts and dinners, including the wine, were eighteen francs more. This we paid between us, and I can safely affirm I never laid out money with greater pleasure than in making this excursion, which, without partaking of the danger and outlay of the ascent of Mont Blanc, is still highly interesting, and abounding in novel and stupendous effects.

CHAPTER IX.

THE AUTHOR'S ASCENT IN 1851.



URING my subsequent visits to Chamouni, I always put up at the Hôtel de Londres. It was by no means so grand or well-appointed an establishment as the new Hotel Royal across the river; but old associations made it very agreeable to me. They had treated me very well in my old student days, and Madame Tairraz was always indefatigable in her courtesies to all the visitors, however humble their appointments. It was almost worth while being slightly ill there, to experience her kind domestic attentions.

Jean Tairraz, who lived opposite, was a very honest, hard-working man, with a large family, and he was usually my companion. We used to walk about together, and talk of the practicability of ascending Mont Blanc; and at last I promised him

that the next time I came to Chamouni, we would make the attempt.

All the winter through, the intention haunted me. I knew, from my engagements in periodical literature, that the effort must be a mere scamper—a spasm almost when it was made; but at length a free fortnight presented itself. I found my old knapsack in a store-room, and I beat out the moths and spiders, and filled it as of old; and on the first of August, 1851, I left London Bridge in the mail-train of the South-Eastern Railway, with my Lord Mayor and other distinguished members of the corporation, who were going to the *fêtes* at Paris in honour of the Exhibition, and who, not having a knapsack under their seat, lost all their luggage, as is no doubt chronicled in the city archives.

I had not undergone the least training for my work. I came from my desk to the railway, from the railway to the diligence, and from that to the *char-à-banc*; and on the night of my arrival at Chamouni I sent for Tairraz, and we sat upon a bit of timber on the edge of the Arve, consulting upon the practicability of the ascent. He feared the weather was going to change, and that I was scarcely in condition to attempt it; but he would call a meeting of the chief guides at his little curiosity-shop next morning, and let me know the result. I made up

my mind, at the same time, to walk as much as I could ; and, on the second day of my arrival, I went twice to the Mer de Glace, and, indeed, crossed to the other side by myself. In the court-yard of the Hôtel de Londres, on the Friday afternoon, I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of three young gentlemen, who had come from Ouchy, on the Lake of Geneva, with the intention, also, of trying the ascent. It was immediately settled that we should unite our caravans ; and that same evening, Jean Tairraz, Jean Tairraz the elder, Jean Carrier, and Gedeon Balmat, met us, to settle our plans. The weather had unfortunately changed. It rained constantly. The wind came up the valley—always a bad sign—and the clouds were so low that we could not even see the Aiguilles, nor the top of the Brevent. But so determined were we to go, that, at all risks, we should have ventured. Every arrangement of food, covering, &c., was left to M. Edouard Tairraz, the landlord of the excellent Hôtel de Londres ; and it was understood that we were all to keep in readiness to start at half an hour's notice. My young friends, who had been in regular training for some time, continued to perform prodigies of pedestrianism. I did as much as I could ; but, unfortunately, was taken so poorly on my return from Montanvert on the Monday—I suspect from sudden overwork, and

sitting about in the wet—that I was obliged to lie down on my bed for four or five hours on my return to the hotel, and, in very low spirits, I began to despair of success.

All this time the weather never improved: it rained unceasingly. We almost rattled the barometer to pieces in our anxiety to detect a change; and Jean made an excursion with me to the cottage of one of the Balmats—the very same house spoken of in my old book, “The Peasants of Chamouni”—who was reported to have a wonderful and valuable weather-guide, the like of which had never been seen before in the valley, called *Le Menteur* by the neighbours, because it always foretold the reverse of what would happen. This turned out to be one of the little Dutch houses, with the meteorological lady and gentleman occupiers. The lady, in her summer costume, was most provokingly abroad, and the worst fears were entertained. Whilst, however, we were at dinner that day, all the fog rolled away clean out of the valley, as if by magic. The mists rose up the *aiguilles* like the flocks of steam from a valley railway; the sun broke out, and M. Tairraz cried out from the top of the table—“*Voilà le beau temps qui vient : vous ferez une belle ascension, Messieurs ; et demain.*”

We thought no more of dinner that day; all was

now hurry and preparation. At every stove in the kitchen, fowls, and legs and shoulders of mutton, were turning. The guides were beating up the porters, who were to carry the heavier baggage as far as the edge of the glacier; the peasants were soliciting us to be allowed to join the party as volunteers; and the inhabitants of the village, generally, had collected in the small open space between the church and the Hôtel de l'Union, and were talking over the chances of the excursion—for the mere report of an attempt puts them all in a bustle. We walked about Chamouni that night with heads erect, and an imposing step. People pointed at us, and came from the hotels to see what we were like. For that evening, at least, we were evidently great persons.

The sun went down magnificently, and everything promised a glorious day on the morrow. I collected all my requisites. Our host lent me a pair of high gaiters, and Madame Tairraz gave me a fine pair of scarlet garters to tie them up with. I also bought a green veil, and Jean brought me a pair of blue spectacles. In my knapsack I put other shoes, socks, and trousers, and an extra shirt; and I got a new spike driven into my baton, for the glacier. I was still far from well, but the excitement pulled me through all discomfort. I did not sleep at all that

night, from anxiety as to the success of the undertaking : I knew all the danger ; and when I made a little parcel of my money, and the few things I had in my "kit," and told my friend, Mr. William Beverley, who had come with me from London, to take them home if I did not return, I am afraid my attempt to be careless about the matter was a failure. I had set a small infernal machine, that made a hideous noise at appointed hours, to go off at six ; but I believe I heard every click it gave, all through the night ; and I forestalled its office in the morning by getting out of bed myself at sunrise and stopping it.

We met at seven o'clock on the morning of Tuesday the 12th, to breakfast. All our guides and porters had a feast in the garden, and were in high spirits—for the glass had gone up half an inch, and not a cloud was to be seen in the sky. Nothing could exceed the bustle of the inn-yard ; everybody had collected to see the start : the men were dividing and portioning the fowls, and bottles of wine, and rugs, and wrappers ; something was constantly being forgotten, and nobody could find whatever was of most importance to them ; and the good-tempered cook—another Tairraz—kept coming forth from the kitchen with so many additional viands, that I began to wonder when our stores would be completed. The list of articles of food which we took up was as follows :—

NOTE NO. 1.

PROVISIONS FOR THE ASCENT OF MONT BLANC.

Hôtel de Londres, Chamouni,
August 12, 1851.

	Francs.
60 bottles of Vin Ordinaire	60
6 do Bordeaux	36
10 do. St. George	30
15 do. St. Jean	30
3 do. Cognac	15
1 do. syrup of raspberries	3
6 do. lemonade	6
2 do. champagne... ..	14
20 loaves	30
10 small cheeses	8
6 packets of chocolate	9
6 do. sugar	6
4 do. prunes	6
4 do. raisins	6
2 do. salt	1
4 wax candles	4
6 lemons... ..	1
4 legs of mutton	24
4 shoulders, do.	12
6 pieces of veal	30
1 piece of beef	5
11 large fowls	30
35 small do.	87
Total	456

About half-past seven we started ; and as we left the inn, and traversed the narrow ill-paved streets of Chamouni towards the bridge, I believe we formed the largest caravan that had ever gone off together.



ON THE ROAD TO LES PÉLERINS.

Each of us had four guides, making twenty in all ;* and the porters and volunteers I may reckon at another score ; besides which, there was a rabble rout of friends, and relations, and sweethearts, and boys, some of whom came a considerable distance with us. I had a mule waiting for me at the bridle-road that runs through the fields towards the dirty little village of Les Pélerins—for I wished to keep myself as fresh

* The following were the names of our guides, copied from my certificate of the ascent :—Jean Tairraz, Jean Tairraz, Jean Carrier, Gedeon Balmat, Michel Couttet, Frederic Tairraz, Pierre Cachat, Michel Couttet, François Cachat, Joseph Tiarraz, Joseph Tissay, Edouard Carrier, Michel Devouassoud, Auguste Devouassoud, François Favret. One guide—I forget his name—was poorly, and could not sign, the next morning.

as I could for the real work. I do not think I gained anything by this, for the brute was exceedingly troublesome to manage up the rude steep path and



CASCADE DES PELERINS.

amongst the trees. I expect my active young companions had the best of it on their own good legs.

Dressed, at present, in light boating attire, they were types of fellows in first-rate fibrous muscular condition; and their sunny good temper, never once clouded during the journey, made everything bright and cheering.

The first two hours of the ascent presented no remarkable features, either of difficulty or prospect. The path was very steep and rugged, through a stunted copse of pines and shrubs, between which we saw on our right the glistening ice-towers of the lower part of the Glacier des Bossons. On our left was the ravine, along which the torrent courses to form the Cascade des Pélerins. The two nice girls who keep the little *châlet* at the waterfall, came across the wood to wish us God speed. Julie Favret, the prettier of the two, was said to be engaged to our guide Jean Carrier—a splendid young fellow—so they lingered behind our caravan some little time; and when Jean rejoined us, an unmerciful shower of *badinage* awaited him. We kept on in single file, winding backwards and forwards amongst the trees, until we came to the last habitation up the mountain, which is called the Châlet de la Para; and here I was glad to quit my mule, and proceed with the rest on foot. From this point the vegetation gradually became more scanty; and at last, even the fir-trees no longer grew about us. The hill-side was bare and arid,

covered with the *débris* of the spring avalanches—amongst which tufts of alpine rhododendron were blowing—and some goats were trying very hard to pick up a living. Our caravan was now spread about far and wide; but at half-past nine we came to an enormous block of granite, called the Pierre Pointue, and here we reunited our forces and rested awhile. During our halt the porters readjusted their packs; and some who had carried or dragged up billets of wood with them, which they found on the way, chopped them into lengths, and tied them on to their knapsacks. The weight some of these men marched under was surprising. Hitherto we had been on the ridge of one of the mighty buttresses of Mont Blanc, which hem in the glaciers between them: we had now to cling along its side to gain the ice. This part of the journey requires a strong head: here, and towards the termination of the ascent, dizziness would be fatal. Along the side of the mountain, which is all but perpendicular, the goats have worn a rude track, scarcely a foot broad. On your left your shoulder rubs the rock; and on your right there is a frightful precipice, at the bottom of which, hundreds of feet below you, is that confusion of ice, granite blocks, stones, and dirty roaring water, which forms in its *ensemble* the boundary of a glacier. The view is superb, but you dare not look at it. It is only when

the loose ground crumbles away beneath your right foot, and you nearly slide away over the precipice,—you would do so if the guide did not seize you by the arm with the sudden grip of a vice,—that you give up staring about you, and do nothing but carefully watch the footsteps of the man who is going on before. The path goes up and down—its gradual tendency, however, is to descend; and in about twenty minutes we had arrived at the bottom of the ravine. Here we had another half-hour's troublesome scramble over loose boulders, which threw and twisted our ankles about in every direction, until at last we gained the second station, if it may so be called, of our journey—another huge rock called the *Pierre à l'Echelle*, under shelter of which a ladder is left from one year to the other, and is carried on by the guides, to assist them in passing the crevices on the glacier. The remains of an old one were likewise lying here, and the rungs of it were immediately seized for firewood.

We were now four thousand feet above Chamouni, and the wonders of the glacier world were breaking upon us. The edge of the ice was still half an hour's walk beyond this rock, but it appeared close at hand—literally within a stone's throw. So vast is everything that surrounds the traveller—there is such an utter absence of any comprehensible standard of compari-

son—his actual presence is so insignificant—a mere unheeded, all but invisible speck on this mountain world—that every idea of proportionate size or distance is lost. And this impossibility of calculation is still further aided by the bright clear air, seen through which the granite outlines, miles away, are as sharply defined as those of the rocks you have quitted but half an hour ago.

Far below us, long after the torrents had lost themselves in little grey threads amongst the pine-woods, we saw the valley of Chamouni, with its fields and pastures parcelled out into parti-coloured districts, like the map of an estate sale; and we found the peaks of other mountains beginning to show above and beyond the lofty Brevent. Above us, mighty plains of snow stretched far and away in all directions; and through them the ice-craggs and pinnacles of the two glaciers, Bossons and Tacconay, were everywhere visible. On either side of us, at the distance perhaps of a couple of miles from each other, were the two huge buttresses of Mont Blanc which form the channel of the glacier before alluded to. Along one of these we had come up from the valley: De Saussure chose the other when he made his ascent in 1787. High up the sides of these mountains were wondrous cornices of ice, of incalculable weight, threatening to fall every instant. Pieces now and

then tumbled down with a noise like distant thunder; but they were not large enough to be dangerous. Had a block of several tons descended at once, its momentum would have carried it along the glacier, sweeping everything before it; and of this occurrence the guides are constantly in dread.

We rested here nearly half an hour; and it was not until we unpacked some of our cold fowls from the *Galignanis* in which they were rolled, that we found our knives and forks had been left behind. Tairraz thought Balmat had them—and Balmat had told Carrier to look after them—and Carrier had seen them on the bench outside the hotel just as we started, and expected young Devouassoud had put them in his knapsack—and so it went on. But nobody, in the end, had brought them. Most of us, however, had pocket-knives; and what we could not carve we pulled to pieces with our fingers, and made a famous meal. The morning was so bright, and the air so pure, and the view so grand, and we were already so fatigued—or fancied we were—that I believe, if the guides had not beaten us up again into marching order, we should have dawdled about this Pierre à l'Echelle for half the day. So we took our batons and started off again; and after a troublesome scuffle over the grimy border of the glacier, we reached its clean edge, and bade good-by



to firm footing and visible safety for the rest of the excursion.

The first portion of the journey across the Glacier des Bossons is easy enough, provided always that the outer crust of the snow lying upon it is tolerably hard. We marched on in single file, the guides taking it by turns to lead (as the first man had of course the heaviest work), amidst cliffs and hillocks, and across sloping fields and uplands, all of dazzling whiteness. I here observed, for the first time, the intense dark-blue colour which the sky apparently assumes. This may be only by comparison with the unsubdued glare from the snow on all sides—since, on

making a kind of *lorgnette* with my two hands, and looking up, as I might have done at a picture, there was nothing unusual in the tint. Our veils and glasses now proved great comforts, for the sun was scorching and the blinding light from the glaciers actually distressing. By degrees our road became less practically easy. We had to make zigzag paths up very steep pitches, and go out of our line to circumvent threatening ice-blocks or suspected crevices. The porters, too, began to grumble, and there was a perpetual wrangling going on between them and the guides as to the extent of their auxiliary march; and another bottle of wine had constantly to be added to the promised reward when they returned to Chamouni. All this time we had been steadily ascending and at last the glacier was so broken, and the crevices so frequent and hugely gaping, that the guides tied us and themselves together with cords, leaving a space of about eight feet between each two men, and prepared for serious work.

The traveller who has only seen the Mer de Glace can form no idea of the terrific beauty of the upper part of the Glacier des Bossons. He remembers the lower portions of the latter, which appears to rise from the very corn-fields and orchards of Chamouni with its towers and ruins of the purest ice, like a long fragment of quartz inconceivably magnified; and a

few steps from the edge of Montanvert will show him the icy chasms of the Mer. But they have little in common with the wild and awful tract we were now preparing to traverse. The Glacier des Bossons, splitting away from that of Tacconay, is rent and torn and tossed about by convulsions scarcely to be comprehended; and the alternate action of the nightly frost and the afternoon sun on this scene of splendid desolation and horror, produces the most extraordinary effects. Huge bergs rise up of a lovely pale sea-green colour, perforated by arches decorated every day with fresh icicles many feet in length; and through these arches one sees other fantastic masses, some thrown like bridges across yawning gulfs, and others planted like old castles on jutting rocks commanding valleys and gorges, all of ice. There is here no plain surface to walk upon; your only standing-room is the top of the barrier that divides two crevices; and as this is broad or narrow, terminating in another frightful gulf, or continuous with another treacherous ice-wall, so can you be slow or rapid. The breadth of the crevice varies with each one you arrive at, and these individually vary constantly, so that the most experienced guide can have no fixed plan of route. The fissure you can leap across to-day, becomes by to-morrow a yawning gulf.

Young Devouassoud now took the lead, with a light

axe, to cut out footsteps and hand-holds with when necessary, and we all followed, very cautiously placing our feet in the prints already made. "*Choisissez vos pas,*" was a phrase we heard every minute. Our progress was necessarily very slow; and sometimes we brought up altogether for a quarter of an hour, whilst a council was held as to the best way of surmounting a difficulty. Once only the neck of ice along which we had to pass was so narrow that I preferred crossing it saddle-fashion, and so working myself on with my hands. It was at points similar to this that I was most astonished at the daring and sure-footedness of the guides. They took the most extraordinary jumps, alighting upon banks of ice that shelved at once clean down to the edges of frightful crevices, to which their feet appeared to cling like those of flies. And yet we were all shod alike, in good stout "shooting-shoes," with a double row of hobnails; but where I was sliding and tumbling about, they stood like rocks. In all this there was, however, little physical exertion for us; it was simply a matter of nerve and steady head. Where the crevice was small, we contrived to jump over it with tolerable coolness: and where it was over three or four feet in breadth, we made a bridge of the ladder, and walked over on the rounds. There is no great difficulty, to be sure, in doing this, when a ladder lies upon the ground; but

with a chasm of unknown depth below it, it is satisfactory to get to the other side as quickly as possible.

At a great many points the snow made bridges, which we crossed easily enough. Only one was permitted to go over at a time ; so that, if it gave way, he might remain suspended by the rope attached to the main body. Sometimes we had to make long detours to get to the end of a crevice, too wide to cross anyway ; at others, we would find ourselves all wedged together, not daring to move, on a neck of ice that at first I could scarcely have thought adequate to have afforded footing to a goat. When we were thus fixed, somebody cut notches in the ice, and climbed up or down, as the case required ; then the knapsacks were pulled up or lowered ; then we followed, and, finally, the rest got on as they could. One scramble we had to make was rather frightful. The reader must imagine a valley of ice, very narrow, but of unknown depth. Along the middle of this there ran a cliff, also of ice, very narrow at the top, and ending suddenly, the surface of which might have been fifteen feet lower than the top of this valley on either side, and on it we could not stand two abreast. A rough notion of a section of this position may be gained from the letter W, depressing the centre angle, and imagining that the cliff on which we were standing. The feet of our ladders were set firm on the neck of the



cliff, and then it was allowed to lean over the crevice until its other end touched the wall, so to speak, of the valley. Its top round was, even then, seven or eight feet below where we wanted to get. One of the young guides went first with his axe, and contrived, by some extraordinary succession of gymnastic feats, to get safely to the top, although we all trembled for him—and, indeed, for ourselves; for, tied as we all

were, and on such a treacherous standing, had he tumbled he would have pulled the next after him, and so on, one following the other, until we should all have gone hopelessly to perdition. Once safe, he soon helped his fellows, and, one after the other, we were drawn up, holding to the cord for our lives. The only accident that befell me on the journey happened here. Being pulled quickly up, my ungloved hand encountered a sharp bit of granite frozen in the ice, and this cut through the veins on my wrist. The wound bled furiously for a few minutes; but the excitement of the scramble had been so great that I actually did not know I was hurt until I saw the blood on the snow. I tied my handkerchief round the cut, and it troubled me no more; but, from such hurried surgery, it has left a pretty palpable scar.

Our porters would go no farther; promises and bribes were now in vain; and they gave up their luggage, and set off on their way back to Chamouni. We now felt, indeed, a forlorn hope; but fortunately we did not encounter anything worse than we had already surmounted; and about four o'clock in the afternoon we got to the station at which we were to remain until midnight.

CHAPTER X.

THE NIGHT-BIVOUAC IN THE SNOW.

THE Grands Mulets are two or three conical rocks which rise like island peaks from the snow and ice at the head of the Glacier des Bossons, and were they loftier, would probably be termed *aiguilles*. They are visible to the naked eye from Chamouni, appearing like little cones on the mountain side. Looking up to them, their left-hand face, or outer side, as I shall call it, goes down straight at once, some hundred feet, to the glacier. On the right hand, and in front, you can scramble up to them pretty well, and gain your resting-place, which is about thirty feet from the summit, either by climbing the rock from the base, which is very steep and fatiguing, or by proceeding farther up along the snow, and then returning a little way, when you find yourself nearly on a level with your shelf—for such it is. A familiar example of what I mean is given in a house built on a steep hill, where the back-door may be on the third story.

The ascent of this rock was the hardest work we had yet experienced: it was like climbing up an immense number of flag-stones, of different heights, set on their edges. Before we got halfway, we heard them firing guns at Chamouni, which showed us that we were being watched from the village; and this gave us fresh energy. At last we reached something like a platform, ten or twelve feet long, and three or four broad; and below this was another tolerably level space, with a low parapet of loose stones built round it, whilst here and there were several nooks and corners which might shelter people on emergency. We acknowledged the salute at Chamouni, by sticking one of our batons into a crevice, and tying a handkerchief to the top of it; and then set to work to clear away the snow from our resting-place. Contrary to all my expectation, the heat we here experienced was most sultry, and even distressing. Those who have noted how long the granite posts and walls of the Italian cities retain the heat after the sun has gone down, will understand that this rock upon which we were was quite warm wherever the rays fell upon it, although in every nook of shade the snow still remained unthawed.

As soon as we had arranged our packs and bundles we began to change our clothes, which were tolerably well wet through with trudging and tumbling about

among the snow ; and cutting a number of pegs, we strewed our garments about the crannies of the rocks to dry. I put on two shirts, two pairs of lamb's-wool socks, a thick pair of Scotch plaid trousers, a "Templar" worsted headpiece, and a common blouse ; and my companions were attired in a similar manner. There was now great activity in the camp. Some of the guides ranged the wine bottles side by side in the snow ; others unpacked the refreshment knapsacks ; others, again, made a rude fireplace, and filled a stew-pan with snow to melt. All this time it was so hot, and the sun was so bright, that I began to think the guide who told De Saussure he should take a parasol up with him, did not deserve to have been laughed at.

As soon as our wild bivouac assumed a little appearance of order, two of the guides were sent up the glacier to go a great way ahead, and then return and report upon the state of the snow on the *plateaux*. When they had started, we perched ourselves about on the comparatively level spaces of the rock, and with knife and fingers began our dinner.

We had scarcely commenced when our party was joined by a young Irishman and a guide, who had taken advantage of the beaten track left behind us, and marched up on our traces with tolerable ease, leaving to us the honour (and the expense) of cutting

out the path. My younger friends, with a little ebullition of university feeling, proposed, under such circumstances, that we should give him a reception in keeping with the glacier; but I thought it would be so hyper-punctilious to show temper here, on the Grands Mulets rocks, up and away in the regions of eternal snow, some thousand feet from the level world, that I ventured on a very mild hint to this effect, which was received with all the acquiescence and good temper imaginable. So we asked him to contribute his stores to our table, and, I dare say, should have got on very well together; but the guides began to squabble about what they considered a breach of etiquette, and presently, with his attendant, he moved away to the next rock. Afterwards another "follower" arrived with his guide, and he subsequently reached the summit.

We kept high festival that afternoon on the Grands Mulets. One stage of our journey—and that one by no means the easiest—had been achieved without the slightest hurt or harm. The consciousness of success thus far, the pure transparent air, the excitement attached to the very position in which we found ourselves, and the strange bewildering novelty of the surrounding scenery, produced a flowing exhilaration of spirits that I had never before experienced. The feeling was shared by all



and we laughed and sang, and made the guides contribute whatever they could to the general amusement, and told them such stories as would translate well in return ; until, I believe, that dinner will never be forgotten by them. A fine diversion was afforded by racing the empty bottles down the glacier. We flung them off from the rock as far as we were able, and then watched their course. Whenever they chanced to point neck first down the slope,

they started off with inconceivable velocity, leaping the crevices by their own impetus, until they were lost in the distance. The excitement of the guides during this amusement was very remarkable: a stand of betting men could not have betrayed more at the Derby. Their anxiety when one of the bottles approached a crevice was intense; and if the gulf was cleared, they perfectly screamed with delight, "*Voici un bon coureur!*" or, "*Tiens! comme il saute bien!*" burst from them; and "*Le grand s'arrête!*" "*Il est perdu—quel dommage!*" "*Non—il marche encore!*" could not have been uttered with more earnestness had they been watching a herd of chamois.

It got somewhat chilly as the sun left the Mulets, but never so cold as to be uncomfortable. With my back against the rock, and a common railway rug over my feet and legs, I needed nothing else. My knapsack was handy at my elbow to lean upon—the same old companion that had often served for my pillow on the Mediterranean and the Nile; and so I had altogether the finest couch upon which a weary traveller ever rested.

I have as yet purposely abstained from describing the glorious view above, around, and beneath us, for the details of our bivouac would have interrupted me as much as the arrangements actually did, until we

got completely settled for the night—at least so much of it as we were to pass there. The Grands Mulets rocks are evidently the highest spines, so to speak, of a ridge of the mountain dividing the origin of the two glaciers of Bossons and Tacconay. They are chosen for a halting-place, not less from their convenient station on the route than from their situation out of the way of the avalanches. From the western face of the peak on which we were situated we could not see Chamouni, except by climbing up to the top of the rock—rather a hazardous thing to do—and peeping over it, when the whole extent of the valley could be very well made out; the villages looking like atoms of white grit upon the chequered ground. Below us, and rising against our position, was the mighty field of the glacier—a huge prairie, if I may term it so, of snow and ice, with vast irregular undulations, which gradually merged into an apparently smooth unbroken tract, as their distance increased. Towering in front of us, several thousand feet higher, and two or three miles away, yet still having the strange appearance of proximity that I have before alluded to, was the huge Dôme du Goûté—the mighty cupola usually mistaken by the valley travellers for the summit of Mont Blanc. Up the glacier, on my left, was an enormous and ascending valley of ice,

which might have been a couple of miles across ; and in its course were two or three steep banks of snow, hundreds of feet in height—giant steps, by which the level landing-place of the Grand Plateau was to be reached. On the first and lowest of these, we could make out two dots, slowly toiling up the slope. They were the pioneers we had started from the Mulets on arriving, and their progress thus far was considered a proof that the snow was in good order. Still farther up, above the level which marked the Grand Plateau, was the actual summit of Mont Blanc. As I looked at it, I thought that in two hours' good walking, along a route apparently as smooth as a race-course after a moderate fall of snow, it might be easily reached ; but immediately my eye returned to the two specks who had already taken up that time in painfully toiling to their present position. The next instant the attempt seemed hopeless, even in a day. as it was now, with the last five hours' unceasing labour and continuous ascent, the lower parts of the glacier that we had traversed appeared close at hand ; but when I looked down to my right, across the valley, and saw the Brevent—to get to the summit of which, from Chamouni, requires hours of toil : when I saw this lofty wall of the valley gradually assuming the appearance of a mere ploughed ridge, I was again

struck with the bewildering impossibility of bringing down anything in this "world of wonders"* to the ordinary rules or experience of proportions and distance.

The sun at length went down behind the Aiguille du Gôûté, and then, for two hours, a scene of such wild and wondrous beauty—of such inconceivable and unearthly splendour—burst upon me, that, spell-bound, and almost trembling with the emotion its magnificence called forth—with every sense, and feeling, and thought absorbed by its brilliancy, I saw far more than the realization of the most gorgeous visions that opium or *hasheesh* could evoke, accomplished. At first, everything about us, above, around, below—the sky, the mountain, and the lower peaks—appeared one uniform creation of burnished gold, so brightly dazzling, that, now our veils were removed, the eye could scarcely bear the splendour. As the twilight gradually crept over the lower world, the glow became still more vivid ; and presently, as the blue mists rose in the valleys, the tops of the higher mountains looked like islands rising from a filmy ocean—an archipelago of gold. By degrees this metallic lustre was softened

"A world of wonders, where Creation seems
No more the works of Nature, but her Dreams."

MONTGOMERY.

into tints,—first orange, and then bright, transparent crimson, along the horizon, rising through the different hues with prismatic regularity, until, immediately above us, the sky was a deep, pure blue, merging towards the east into glowing violet. The snow took its colour from these changes ; and every portion on which the light fell was soon tinged with pale carmine, of a shade similar to that which snow at times assumes, from some imperfectly explained cause, at high elevations—such, indeed, as I had seen, in early summer, upon the Furka and Faulhorn. These beautiful hues grew brighter as the twilight below increased in depth ; and it now came marching up the valley of the glaciers, until it reached our resting-place. Higher and higher still it drove the lovely glory of the sunlight before it, until at last the vast Dôme du Goûté and the summit itself stood out, icelike and grim, in the cold evening air, although the horizon still gleamed with a belt of rosy light.

Although this superb spectacle had faded away, the scene was still even more than striking. The fire which the guides had made, and which was now burning and crackling on a ledge of rock a little below us, threw its flickering light, with admirable effect, upon our band. The men had collected round the blaze, and were making some chocolate, as they sang *patois* ballads and choruses : they were all evidently as

completely at home as they would have been in their own *châlets*. We had arranged ourselves as conveniently as we could, so as not to inconvenience one another, and had still nothing more than an ordinary wrapper over us: there had been no attempt to build the tent with batons and canvas, as I had read in some of the Mont Blanc narratives—the starry heaven was our only roofing. Mr. Floyd and Mr. Philips were already fast asleep. Mr. West was still awake, and I was too excited even to close my eyes in the attempt to get a little repose. We talked for a while, and then he also was silent.

The stars had come out, and, looking over the plateau, I soon saw the moonlight lying cold and silvery on the summit, stealing slowly down the very track by which the sunset glories had passed upward and away. But it came so tardily, that I knew it would be hours before we derived any actual benefit from the light. One after another the guides fell asleep, until only three or four remained round the embers of the fire, thoughtfully smoking their pipes. And then silence, impressive beyond expression, reigned over our isolated world. Often and often, from Chamouni, I had looked up at evening towards the darkening position of the Grands Mulets, and thought, almost with shuddering, how awful it must be for men to pass the night in such a remote, eternal,

and frozen wilderness. And now I was lying there—in the very heart of its icebound and appalling solitude. In such close communion with nature in her grandest aspect, with no trace of the actual living world beyond the mere speck that our little party formed, the mind was carried far away from its ordinary trains of thought—a solemn emotion of mingled awe and delight, and yet self-perception of abject nothingness, alone rose above every other feeling. A vast untrodden region of cold, and silence, and death, stretched out far and away from us on every side; but, above, Heaven, with its countless watchful eyes, was over all!

CHAPTER XI.

THE NIGHT-MARCH ON THE GRAND PLATEAU—THE
MUR DE LA COTE—VICTORY!

It was twenty minutes to twelve when the note of preparation for our second start was sounded. Tairraz shook up the more drowsy of the guides, and they were soon bustling about, and making their arrangements for the work before us. They had not much to carry now. Everything, with the exception of a few bottles of wine, some small loaves, and two or three cold fowls, was to be left on the Grands Mulets: there was no danger of theft from passers-by, as Carrier observed. This quarter of an hour before midnight was, I think, the heaviest during the journey. Now that we were going to leave our lodging, I did feel uncommonly tired; and wild and rugged as it was, I began to think the blankets and

wrappers looked very comfortable in the ruddy fire-light, compared to the glooming desert of ice before us. The moon was still low—that is to say, the light on the mountain had not come farther down than the top of the top of the Aiguille du Goûté, so that we were in comparative darkness. Three or four lanterns were fitted up with candles ; and Jean Tairraz had a fine affair like a Chinese balloon, or more truly, the round *lampions* used in French illuminations, only larger ; and this he tied behind him, to light me as I followed. Michel Devouassoud took the lead ; we came after him with regular numbers of guides, each traveller having a lantern carried before him, and then another guide or two, lightly laden. In this order, in single file, we left the Grands Mulets—not by the scrambling route of our arrival, but by the upper portion of the rocks, where we descended at once, in a few feet, to the snow. As we passed the upper Mulets, we heard our Irish follower “keeping it up” by himself in most convivial fashion, and singing “God save the Queen” to his guide. Soon afterwards we saw his lantern glimmering on our traces ; and the light of the second aspirant was also visible, moving about before his start.

The snowy side of Mont Blanc, between the Grands Mulets and the Rochers Rouges near the summit, is formed by three gigantic steps, if they may so be

called, one above the other, each of which is many hundred feet high. Between each is a comparatively level platform of glacier; and the topmost of these, which is two or three miles across, is called the Grand Plateau. Its position can be made out very well from Chamouni with the naked eye. Up these slopes our road now lay; and for more than two hours we followed one another in silence—now trudging over the level places, and now slowly climbing, in zig-zag up the steepes. Very little talking went on, for we knew that we should soon need all our breath. The walking here, however, was by no means difficult; for the snow was hard and crisp, and we made very good progress, although for a long time we saw the red speck of fire, far below us, gleaming on the Grands Mulets. The stars were out, and the air was sharp and cold, but only disagreeably biting when the lightest puff of wind came. This was not very often, for we were sheltered on all sides by the heights and *aiguilles* around us.

The march from the Mulets to the foot of the Grand Plateau was the most unexciting part of the journey. It was one continuous, steadily ascending tramp of three hours and a half—now and then retracing our footmarks with a little grumbling, when it was found, on gaining the neck of a ridge of snow, that there was an impracticable crevice

on the other side ; but the general work was not much more than that of ascending the Mer de Glace, on the route to the Jardin. Whenever we came to a stand-still, our feet directly got very cold ; and the remedy for this was to drive them well into the snow. The guides were anxious that we should constantly keep in motion ; and, indeed, they were never still themselves during these halts.

We had nearly gained the edge of the Grand Plateau when our caravan was suddenly brought to a stop by the announcement from our leading guide of a huge crevice ahead, to which he could not see any termination ; and it was far too wide to cross by any means. It appeared that the guides had looked forward, all along, to some difficulty here—and they were now really anxious ; for Tairraz said, that if we could not reach the other side our game was up, and we must return. Auguste Devouassoud went ahead and called for a lantern. We had now only one left alight ; two had burnt out, and the other had been lost, shooting away like a meteor down the glacier until it disappeared in a gulf. The remaining light was handed forward, and we watched its course with extreme anxiety, hovering along the edge of the abyss—anon disappearing and then showing again farther off—until at last Auguste shouted out that he had

found a pass, and that we could proceed again. We toiled up a very steep cliff of ice, and then edged the crevice which yawned upon our left in a frightful manner,—more terrible in its semi-obscurity than it is possible to convey an impression of—until the danger was over, and we all stood safely upon the Grand Plateau about half-past three in the morning.

We had now two or three miles of level walking before us; indeed our road, from one end of the plateau to the other, was on a slight descent. Before we started we took some wine; our appetites were not very remarkable, in spite of all our work; but a leathern cup of St. George put a little life and warmth into us, for we were chilled with the delay, and it was now intensely cold. We also saw the other lanterns approaching, and we now formed, as it were, one long caravan. Still in single file we set off again, and the effect of our silent march was now unearthly and solemn, to a degree that was almost painfully impressive. Mere atoms in this wilderness of perpetual frost, we were slowly advancing over the vast plain—slowly following each other on the track which the leading glimmering dot of light aided the guide to select. The reflected moonlight from the Dôme du Goûté, which looked like a huge mountain of frosted silver, threw a cold gleam over the plateau, sufficient to show its immense and ghastly space. High up on our right was the summit of Mont Blanc,



apparently as close and as inaccessible as ever; and immediately on our left was the appalling gulf, yawning in the ice of unknown depth, into which the avalanche swept Dr. Hamel's guides; and in whose depths, ice-bound and unchanged, they are yet locked. Tairraz crept close to me, and said, through his teeth, almost in a whisper—"C'est ici, Monsieur, que mon frère Auguste est péri en 1820, avec Balmat et Carrier: les pauvres corps sont encore là-bas!—ça me donne de peine, toujours, en traversant le Plateau; et la route est encore périlleuse." "Et les avalanches?" I asked—"tombent elles toujours?" "Oui, Monsieur,

toujours—nuit et jour. Le plutôt passé, mieux pour nous!”

In fact, although physically the easiest, this was the most treacherous part of the entire ascent. A flake of snow or a chip of ice, whirled by the wind from the summit, and increasing as it rolled down the top of the mountain, might at length thunder on to our path, and sweep everything before it into the crevice. Everybody was aware of this; and for three-quarters of an hour we kept trudging hurriedly forward, scarcely daring to speak, and every now and then looking up with mistrust at the *calotte*, as the summit is termed, that rose above us in such cold and deceitful tranquillity. Once or twice in my life I have been placed in circumstances of the greatest peril, and I now experienced the same dead calm in which my feelings always were sunk on these occasions. I knew that every step we took was gained from the chance of a horrible death; and yet the only thing that actually distressed me was, that the two front lanterns would not keep the same distance from one another—a matter of the most utter unimportance to everybody.

At last we got under the shelter of the Rochers Rouges, and then we were in comparative safety; since, were an avalanche to fall, they would turn its course on to the plateau we had just quitted. A small

council was assembled there. The Irishman, who had got a little ahead of us, was compelled to give in—he was done up and could go no farther. Indeed, it would have been madness to have attempted it, for we found him lying on the snow, vomiting frightfully, with considerable hæmorrhage from the nose. I think this must have been about the same elevation at which young Mr. Talfourd was compelled to give in, in 1843. I told our poor companion that he must not think the worse of us for leaving him there, with his guide, as, unfortunately, we could do nothing for him; but I recommended him to go back as speedily as he could to the Grands Mulets, where he would find everything that he might require. He took this advice, and, indeed, we found him still at the rock, on our return.

As we reached the almost perpendicular wall of ice below the Rochers Rouges, we came into the full moonlight; and, at the same time, far away on the horizon, the red glow of daybreak was gradually tinging the sky, and bringing the higher and more distant mountains into relief. The union of these two effects of light was very strange. At first, simply cold and bewildering, it had nothing of the sunset glories of the Grands Mulets; but after a time, when peak after peak rose out from the gloomy world below, the spectacle was magnificent. In the dark,

boundless space a small speck of light would suddenly appear, growing larger and larger, until it took the palpable form of a mountain-top. Whilst this was going on, other points would brighten, here and there, and increase in the same manner; then a silvery gleam would mark the position of a lake reflecting the sky—it was that of Geneva—until the grey, hazy ocean lighted up into hills, and valleys, and irregularities, and the entire world below warmed into the glow of sunrise. We were yet in gloom, shadowed by the Aiguille Sans Nom, with the summit of Mont Blanc shut out from us by the Rochers Rouges; but, of course, it must have been the earliest to catch the rays.

It was now fearfully cold; and every now and then a sharp north-east wind nearly cut us into pieces, bringing with it a storm of spiculæ of ice, which were really very painful, as they blew against and passed our faces and ears: so we took to our veils again, which all night long had been twisted round our hats. I felt very chilled and dispirited. I had now passed two nights without sleep; and I had really eaten nothing since the yesterday's morning but part of an egg, a piece of fowl, and a little bit of bread—for my illness had taken away all my appetite; and on this small diet I had been undergoing the greatest work. But none of us were complaining

of nausea, or difficulty of breathing, or blood to the head, or any of the other symptoms which appear to have attacked most persons even on the Grand Plateau; so I plucked up fresh courage, and prepared for our next achievement.

This was no light affair. From the foot of the Rochers Rouges there runs a huge and slanting buttress of ice, round which we had to climb from the north-east to the east. Its surface was at an angle of about sixty degrees. Above us, it terminated in a mighty cliff, entirely covered with icicles of marvellous length and beauty; below, it was impossible to see where it went, for it finished suddenly in an edge, which was believed to be the border of a great crevice. Along this we now had to go; and the journey was as hazardous a one as a man might make along a barn-top with frozen snow on it. Jean Carrier went first, with his axe, and very cautiously cut every step in which we were to place our feet in the ice. It is difficult at times to walk along ice on a level; but when that ice is tilted up more than halfway towards the perpendicular, with a fathomless termination below, and no more foot and hand hold afforded than can be chipped out, it becomes a nervous affair enough. The cords came into requisition again; and we went along, leaning very much over to our right, and, I must say, paying little attention to our guides,

who were continually pointing out spots for us to admire—the Jardin, Monte Rosa, and the Col du Géant—as they became visible. It took us nearly half an hour to creep round this hazardous slope, and then we came once more upon a vast undulating field of ice, looking straight down the Glacier du Tacul, towards the upper part of the Mer de Glace—the reverse of the view the visitor enjoys from the Jardin.

My eyelids had felt very heavy for the last hour; and, but for the absolute mortal necessity of keeping them widely open, I believe would have closed before this; but now such a strange and irrepressible desire to go to sleep seized hold of me that I almost fell fast off as I sat down for a few minutes on the snow to tie my shoes. But the foremost guides were on the march again, and I was compelled to go on with the caravan. From this point, on to the summit, for a space of two hours, I was in such a strange state of mingled unconsciousness and acute observation—of combined sleeping and waking—that the old-fashioned word “bewitched” is the only one that I can apply to the complete confusion and upsetting of sense in which I found myself plunged. With the perfect knowledge of where I was, and what I was about—even with such caution as was required to place my feet on particular places in the snow—I

conjured up such a set of absurd and improbable phantoms about me, that the most spirit-ridden intruder upon a Mayday festival on the Hartz mountains was never more beleaguered. I am not sufficiently versed in the finer theories of the psychology of sleep to know if such a state might be; but I believe for the greater part of this bewildering period I was fast asleep, with my eyes open, and through them the wandering brain received external impressions; in the same manner as, upon awaking, the phantasms of our dreams are sometimes carried on, and connected with objects about the chamber. It is very difficult to explain the odd state in which I was, so to speak, entangled. A great many people I knew in London were accompanying me, and calling after me, as the stones did after Prince Pervis, in the *Arabian Nights*. Then there was some terribly elaborate affair that I could not settle, about two bedsteads, the whole blame of which transaction, whatever it was, lay on my shoulders; and then a literary friend came up, and told me he was sorry we could not pass over his ground on our way to the summit, but that the King of Prussia had forbidden it. Everything was as foolish and unconnected as this, but it worried me painfully; and my senses were under such little control, and I reeled and staggered about so, that when we had crossed the snow prairie, and

arrived at the foot of an almost perpendicular wall of ice, four or five hundred feet high—the terrible *Mur de la Côte*—up which we had to climb, I sat down again on the snow, and told Tairraz that I would not go any farther, but that they might leave me there if they pleased.

The Mont Blanc guides are used to these little varieties of temper, above the Grand Plateau. In spite of my mad determination to go to sleep, Balmat and another set me up on my legs again, and told me that if I did not exercise every caution, we should all be lost together, for the most really dangerous part of the whole ascent had ~~arrived~~ arrived. I had the greatest difficulty in getting my wandering wits into order; but the risk called for the strongest mental effort; and, with just sense enough to see that our success in scaling this awful precipice was entirely dependent upon “pluck,” I got ready for the climb. I have said the *Mur de la Côte* is some hundred feet high, and is an all but perpendicular iceberg. At one point you can reach it from the snow, but immediately after you begin to ascend it, obliquely, there is nothing below but a chasm in the ice more frightful than anything yet passed. Should the foot slip, or the baton give way, there is no chance for life—you would glide like lightning from one frozen crag to another, and finally be dashed to pieces, hundreds and hundreds of feet



SCALING THE MUR DE LA COTE.

below in the horrible depths of the glacier. Were it in the valley, simply rising up from a glacier *moraine*, its ascent would require great nerve and caution ; but here, placed fourteen thousand feet above the level of the sea, terminating in an icy abyss so deep that the bottom is lost in obscurity ; exposed, in a highly rarefied atmosphere, to a wind cold and violent beyond all conception ; assailed, with muscular powers already taxed far beyond their strength, and nerves shaken by constantly increasing excitement and want of rest—with bloodshot eyes, and raging thirst, and a pulse

leaping rather than beating—with all this, it may be imagined that the frightful *Mur de la Côte* calls for more than ordinary determination to mount it.

Of course every footstep had to be cut with the adzes ; and my blood ran colder still as I saw the first guides creeping like flies upon its smooth glistening surface. The two Tairraz were in front of me, with the fore part of the rope, and François Favret, I think, behind. I scarcely know what our relative positions were, for we had not spoken much to one another for the last hour ; every word was an exertion, and our attention was solely confined to our own progress. In spite of all my exertions, my confusion of ideas and extraordinary drowsiness increased to such a painful degree, that, clinging to the hand-holes made in the ice, and surrounded by all this horror, I do believe, if we had halted on our climb for half a minute, I should have gone off asleep. But there was no pause. We kept progressing, very slowly indeed, but still going on—and up so steep a path, that I had to wait until the guide before me removed his foot, before I could put my hand into the notch. I looked down below two or three times, but was not at all giddy, although the depth lost itself in the blue haze.

For upwards of half an hour we kept on slowly mounting this iceberg, until we reached the foot of

the last ascent—the *calotte*, as it is called—the “cap” of Mont Blanc. The danger was now over, but not the labour, for this dome of ice was difficult to mount. The axe was again in requisition; and everybody was so “blown,” in common parlance, that we had to stop every three or four minutes. My young companions kept bravely on, like fine fellows as they were, getting ahead even of some of the guides; but I was perfectly done up. Honest Tairraz had no sinecure to pull me after him, for I was stumbling about, as though completely intoxicated. I could not keep my eyes open, and planted my feet anywhere but in the right place. I know I was exceedingly cross. I have even a recollection of having scolded my “team,” because they did not go quicker; and I was excessively indignant when one of them dared to call my attention to Monte Rosa. At last, one or two went in front, and thus somewhat quickened our progress. Gradually our speed increased, until I was scrambling almost on my hands and knees; and then, as I found myself on a level, it suddenly stopped. I looked round, and saw there was nothing higher. The batons were stuck in the snow, and the guides were grouped about, some lying down, and others standing in little parties. I was on the top of Mont Blanc!

The ardent wish of years was gratified; but I was

so completely exhausted, that, without looking round me, I fell down upon the snow, and was asleep in an instant. I never knew the charm before of that mysterious and brief repose, which ancient people term "forty winks." Six or seven minutes of dead slumber was enough to restore the balance of my ideas; and when Tairraz awoke me, I was once more perfectly myself. And now I entered into the full delight that the consciousness of our success brought with it. It was a little time before I could look at anything steadily. I wanted the whole panorama condensed into one point; for, gazing at Geneva and the Jura, I thought of the plains of Lombardy behind me; and turning round towards them, my eye immediately wandered away to the Oberland, with its hundred peaks glittering in the bright morning sun. There was too much to see, and yet not enough: I mean, the view was so vast that, whilst every point and valley was a matter of interest, and eagerly scanned, yet the elevation was so great that all detail was lost. What I did observe I will endeavour to render account of—not as a tourist might do, who, planting himself in imagination on the Mont Blanc of Keller's map or Mr. Auldjo's plan, puts down all the points that he considers might be visible, but just as they struck me with an average traveller's notion of Switzerland.

In the first place it must be understood, as I have just intimated, that the height greatly takes away from the interest of the view, which its expanse scarcely makes amends for. As a splendid panorama, the sight from the Rigi Kulm is more attractive. The chequered fields, the little steamer plying from Lucerne to Fluelyn, the tiny omnibuses on the lake-side road to Art, the desolation of Goldau, and the section of the fatal Rossberg, are all subjects of interest and much admiration. But the Rigi is six thousand feet above the sea level, and Mont Blanc is over fifteen thousand. The little clustered village, seen from the Kulm, becomes a mere white speck from the crown of the monarch.

The morning was most lovely ; there was not even a wreath of mist coming up from the valley. One of our guides had been up nine times, and he said he had never seen such weather. But with this extreme clearness of atmosphere there was a filmy look about the peaks, merging into a perfect haze of distance in the valleys. All the great points in the neighbourhood of Chamouni—the Buet, the Aiguille Verte, the Col du Bonhomme, and even the Bernese Alps—were standing forth clear enough ; but the other second-class mountains were mere ridges. It was some time before I could find out the Brevent at all, and many of the Aiguilles

were sunk and merged into the landscape. There was a strange feeling in looking down upon the summits of these mountains, which I had been accustomed to know only as so many giants of the horizon. The other hills had sunk into perfect insignificance, or rather looked pretty much the same as they do in the relief models at the map shops. The entire length of the Lake of Geneva, with the Jura beyond, was very clearly defined ; and beyond these again were the faint blue hills of Burgundy. Turning round to the south-east, I looked down on the Jardin, along the same glacier by which the visitor to the Couvercle lets his eye travel to the summit of Mont Blanc. Right away over the Col du Géant we saw the plains of Lombardy very clearly, and one of the guides insisted upon pointing out Milan ; but I could not acknowledge it. I was altogether more interested in finding out the peaks and gorges comparatively near the mountain, than straining my eyes after remote matters of doubt. Of the entire *coup d'œil* no descriptive power can convey the slightest notion. Both Mont Blanc and the Pyramids, viewed from below, have never been clearly pictured, from the utter absence of anything by which proportion could be fixed. From the same cause, it is next to impossible to describe the apparently boundless undulating expanse of jagged snow-

topped peaks, that stretched away as far as the horizon on all sides beneath us. Where everything is so almost incomprehensible in its magnitude, no sufficiently graphic comparison can be instituted.

The first curiosity satisfied, we produced our stores, and collected together on the hard snow to discuss them. We had some wine, and a cold fowl or two, a small quantity of bread and cheese, some chocolate in *batons*, and a bag of prunes, which latter proved of great service in the ascent. One of these, rolled about in the mouth without being eaten, served to dispel the dryness of the throat and palate, otherwise so distressing.

The rarefaction of the air was now nothing to what I had anticipated. We had heard legends, down at Chamouni, of the impossibility of lighting pipes at this height ; but now all the guides were smoking most comfortably. Our faces had an odd dark appearance, the result of congestion, and almost approaching the tint I had noticed in persons attacked by Asiatic cholera ; but this was not accompanied by any sensation of fulness, or even inconvenience. The only thing that distressed me was the entire loss of feeling in my right hand, on which I had not been able to wear one of the fur gloves, from the bad grasp it allowed to my pole. Accordingly, it was frost-bitten. The guides evidently looked upon this as a more

serious matter than I did myself, and for five minutes I underwent a series of rather severe operations of very violent friction. After a while the numbness partially went away; but even as I now write, my little finger is without sensation, and on the approach of cold, it becomes very painful. However, all this was nothing: we had succeeded, and were sitting altogether, without hurt or harm, on the summit of Mont Blanc. We did not feel much inclined to eat, but our *vin ordinaire* was perfect nectar; and the bottle of champagne brought up on purpose to be drunk on the summit was considered a finer wine than had ever been met with. We all shook each other by the hand, and laughed at such small pleasantries so heartily, that it was quite diverting; and a rapid programme of toasts went round, of which the most warmly drunk was "Her," according to each of our separate opinions on that point. We made no "scientific observations,"—the acute and honest De Saussure had done everything that was wanted by the world of that kind; and those who have since worried themselves during the ascent about "elevations" and temperatures, have added nothing to what he told us sixty years ago. But we had beheld all the wonders and horrors of the glacier world in their wildest features; we had gazed on scenery of such fantastic yet magnificent

nature as we might not hope to see again ; we had laboured with all the nerve and energy we could command to achieve a work of downright unceasing danger and difficulty, which not more than one-half of those who try are able to accomplish, and the triumph of which is, even now, shared but by a comparative handful of travellers—and we had succeeded !



CHAPTER XII.

COMING DOWN.

ALTHOUGH the cold was by no means severe when the air was still, yet, as I have before stated, the lightest puff of wind appeared to freeze us; and we saw the guides getting their packs ready—they were very light now—and preparing to descend. Accordingly, we left the summit at half-past nine, having been there exactly half an hour. We learned afterwards that we had been seen from Chamouni by telescopes, and that the people there had fired cannon when they perceived us on the summit: but these we did not hear. We were about three hours and a half getting back to the Grands Mulets; and, with the exception of the Mur de la Côte (which required the same caution as in coming up), the descent was a matter of great amusement. Sliding, tumbling, and staggering about, setting all the zigzags at defiance, and making direct short cuts from one to the other—

sitting down at the top of the snow slopes, and launching ourselves off, feet first, until, not very clever at self-guidance, we turned right round and were stopped by our own heads: all this was capital fun. The guides managed to slide down very cleverly, keeping their feet. They leant rather back, steadying themselves with their poles, which also acted as a drag, by being pressed deeply into the snow when they wished to stop, and so scudded down like the bottles from the Grands Mulets. I tried this plan once, but before I had gone a dozen yards I went head-over-heels, and nearly lost my baton; so that I preferred the more ignoble but equally exciting mode of transit first alluded to.

Although our return to the Mulets was accomplished in about half the time of the ascent, yet I was astonished at the distance we had traversed, now that my attention was not so much taken away by the novelty of the scenery and situations. There appeared to be no end to the *montets* which divide the *plateaux*; and, after a time, as we descended, the progress became very troublesome, for the snow was beginning to thaw in the sun, and we went up to our knees at every step. We were now not together—little parties of three or four dotting the glacier above and in front of us. Everybody chose his own route, and glissaded, or skated, or rolled down, according to his



fancy. The sun was very bright and warm—we were all very cheerful and merry; and although I had not had any sleep for two nights, I contrived to keep up tolerably well with the foremost.

At one o'clock in the afternoon we got back to our old bivouac on the Grands Mulets. We had intended to have remained here some little time, but the heat on the rock was so stifling that we could scarcely support it; and Tairraz announced that the glacier was becoming so dangerous to traverse, from the melting

of the snow, that even now it would be a matter of some risk to cross it. So we hastily finished our scraps of refreshment, and drank our last bottle of wine—out of a stewpan, by the way, for we had lost our leathern cups in our evolutions on the ice—and then, making up our packs, bade good-bye to the Grands Mulets, most probably for ever.

In five minutes we found that, after all, the greatest danger of the undertaking was to come. The whole surface of the Glacier de Bossons had melted into perfect sludge; the ice-cliffs were dripping in the sun, like the well at Knaresborough: every minute the bridges over the crevices were falling in; and we sank almost to our waists in the thawing snow at every step we took. I could see that the guides were uneasy. All the ropes came out again, and we were tied together in parties of three, about ten feet distant from one another. And now all the work of yesterday had to be gone over again, with much more danger attached to it. From the state of the snow, the guides avowed that it was impossible to tell whether we should find firm standing on any arch we arrived at, or go through it at once into some frightful chasm. They sounded every bridge we came to with their poles, and a shake of the head was always a signal for a *détour*. One or two of the tracks by which we had marched up yesterday had now disappeared altogether, and fresh ones had to be

cautiously selected. We had one tolerably narrow escape. Tairraz, who preceded me, had jumped over a crevice, and upon the other side alighted on a mere bracket of snow, which directly gave way beneath him. With the squirrel-like rapid activity of the Chamouni guides, he whirled his baton round so as to cross the crevice, which was not very broad, but of unknown depth, transversely. This saved him, but the shock pulled me off my legs. Had he fallen, I must have followed him—since we were tied together—and the guide would have been dragged after me. I was more startled by this little accident than by any other occurrence during the journey.

At length, after much anxiety, we came to the *moraine* of the glacier, and I was not sorry to find myself standing upon a block of hard granite, for I honestly believe that our lives had not been worth a penny's purchase ever since we left the Grands Mulets. We had a long rest at the Pierre à l'Echelle, where we deposited our ladder for the next aspirants, and, in the absence of everything else, were content with a little water for refreshment. The cords were now untied, and we went on as we pleased; but I ordered Jean Carrier to go ahead, and tell his pretty Julie at the Pavillon des Pèlerins that we should make all the party drink her health there—a promise I had given a day or two previously

—and he started off like a chamois. Jean Tairraz was sent forward to bespeak some milk for us at the Châlet de la Para, and then we took our time; and, once more upon solid trustworthy ground, began the last descent. Some mules were waiting at the Châlet, but the road was so exceedingly steep and tortuous that I preferred my own legs; and by five o'clock we had come down the pine wood, and found ourselves at the little cabin, with Julie, all brightness and blushes, busying about to receive us. She gave me a cornelian heart, and said something laughingly



about "*une alliance*." But Julie has since married, so the alliance is broken.

Several ladies and gentlemen had come thus far to meet us; and, what with the friends and families of the guides, we now formed a very large party indeed. It was here humbly suggested that we should mount our mules, to render our entry into Chamouni as imposing as possible; so after the men had drunk

with their friends, and with one another, and indeed with everybody, we formed into our order of march across the fields between the two villages. First went the two Tairraz, Balmat, and Carrier, with their ice-axes, as the chiefs of the party, and specially attached to us; then we came on our mules; after us walked the body of the guides, with such of their families as had come to meet them, and little boys and girls, so proud to carry their batons and appear to belong to the procession; and, finally, the porters and volunteers with the knapsacks brought up the rear. And so we went merrily through the fields that border the Arve, in the bright afternoon sunlight, receiving little bouquets from the girls on the way, and meeting fresh visitors from Chamouni every minute.

We had heard the guns firing at Chamouni ever since we left the Pèlerins; but as we entered the village we were greeted with a tremendous round of Alpine artillery from the roof of the new Hôtel Royal, and the garden and courtyard of the Hôtel de Londres. The whole population was in the streets, and on the bridge; the ladies at the hotels waving their handkerchiefs, and the men cheering; and a harpist and a violin-player now joined the *cortège*. When we got into the court-yard of our hotel, M. Edouard Tiarraz had dressed a little table with some beau-



tiful bouquets and wax candles, until it looked uncommonly like an altar, but for the half-dozen of champagne that formed a portion of its ornaments ; and here we were invited to drink with him, and be gazed at, and have our hands shaken by everybody. One or two enthusiastic tourists expected me there and then to tell them all about it ; but the crowd was now so great, and the guns so noisy, and the heat and dust so oppressive, coupled with the state of excitement in which we all were, that I was not sorry to get away and hide in a comfortable warm bath which our worthy host had prepared already. This, with an

entire change of clothes, and a quiet comfortable dinner, put me all right again ; and at night, when I was standing in the balcony of my chamber window, looking at the twinkling pine illuminations on the bridge, and watching the last glow of sunset once more disappear from the summit of the grand old mountain king, I could hardly persuade myself that the whole affair had not been a wonderful dream.

I did not sleep very well when I went to bed. I was tumbling down precipices all night long, and so feverish, that I drank off the entire contents of a large water-jug before morning. My face, in addition, gave me some pain, where the sun had caught it, otherwise I was perfectly well—sufficiently so, indeed, to get up tolerably early the next day, and accompany a friend on foot to Montanvert. In the evening we gave the guides a supper in the hotel garden. I had the honour of presiding ; and what with toasts, and speeches, and songs—excellent fare, and a warm-hearted company—the moon was once more on the summit of Mont Blanc before we parted. I know it will be some time before the remembrance of that happy evening passes away from those between whom and ourselves such an honest friendship had grown up as only fellow-labouring in difficulty and danger can establish.

CHAPTER XIII.,

AND LAST.

THE undertaking so long anticipated is all over, and I am sitting in a little top-bedroom of the *Couronne* at Geneva, into which my good friend, Madame Berseth, has been obliged to thrust me, and settling the expenses with Jean Tairraz. The sunset, the glaciers, and the Mur de la Côte, have come down to a matter of "little bills." He first gives me the hotel account after the ascent. It is as follows :—

NOTE No. 2.

	Francs.	Cents.
103 bottles lost	50	
18 breakfasts to guides	22	50
18 suppers to do.	36	
6 bottles London porter	18	
	126	50

So it will be seen our racing with the bottles was not without some of the expense attached to that sport in

general. But it was better to throw them away than to fatigue the men with the thankless task of carrying them down again. They were charged at a high rate, as everything else is at Chamouni; because, it must be remembered, in such a wild secluded place the transport becomes very expensive.

I next receive his own account:—

NOTE No. 3.

	Francs.	Cents.
16 guides	1600	
18 porters	108	
3 mules	18	
The boy	4	
1 lantern broken	1	75
Milk at the Chalet.....	1	50
Extra pay to porters.....	5	
Expenses due to Julie at the Pavillon des Pélerins	16	
Nails for shoes	2	
	1755	25

Adding these together, we make—

	Francs.	Cents.
Provisions for ascent.....	456	
Subsequent expenses.....	126	50
Tairraz' guides' accounts	1755	25
Total	2337	75

This divided by four—the number of tourists—gives about 584 francs each. Had I gone up alone, of course the expense would have been greater.

Not without vivid recollections of a delightful and

wondrous journey, thus safely and happily accomplished, and of the excellent humour and courteous attention of my companions—with a recommendation to all whose time and constitution will permit, to make the same excursion, is this plain narrative concluded.



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